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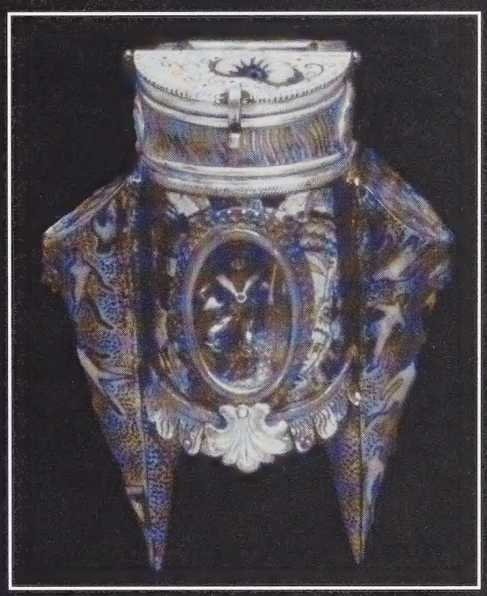

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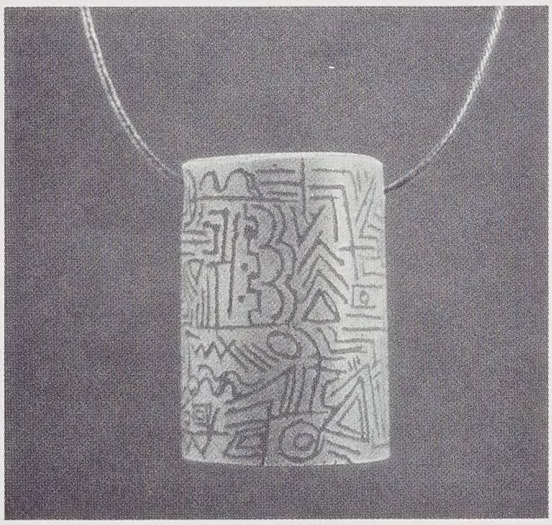

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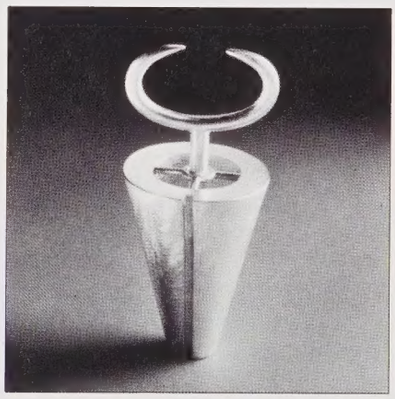

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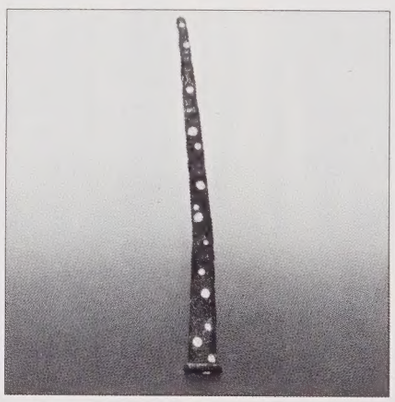

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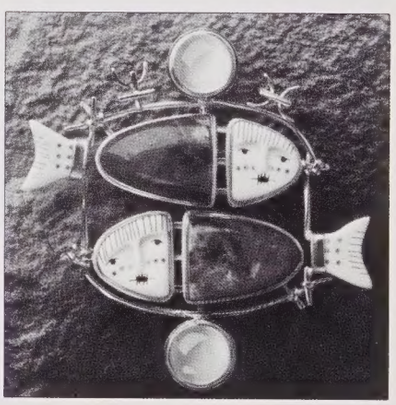

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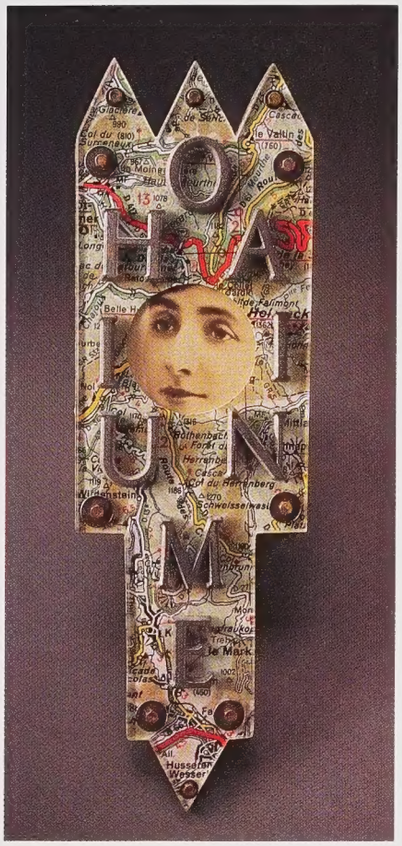
CAROLYN MORRIS BACH

Metalsmith

Spring 1993

Volume 13 Number 2



Thomas Mann
Memory Map, 1992
map, photo, letters, Plexiglas
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Phillip Baldwin and Jim Kelso
Autumn Dagger, 1990
fancy cross-section pattern
welded steel blade,
incised pattern, cast chased
and fabricated
sterling silver with shibuichi
and gold handle,
wenge wood with gold chape
on sheath, 13 x 1¼ x ¾"
Ivano Comi collection, Lecco, Italy
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Editorial

As I write my first editorial as the editor of *Metalsmith*, the radio, in the background is fading in and out with reporters' and commentators' views on the newly inaugurated President. I hear phrases such as "new generation", "mandate for change", and "the new covenant." In some ways it would be easy and editorially advantageous for me to try to ride the coattails of this mood, to introduce myself to you as an agent of change and new beginnings. But as I review past issues of this publication, tracing in an evening's time *Gold Dust's* evolution from an inexpensive newsletter to the lush, beautifully produced magazine that *Metalsmith* is today, I do not believe that a declaration of change would do justice to the magazine, the people who chose me for this position, or the readers and friends of *Metalsmith*.

Metalsmith's growth over the years: its steadily improving visual quality and the caliber of its articles and reviews, give evidence of a direction and movement that I do not wish to alter. The willingness of its past editor and writers to engage readers in dialogue concerning the history of, and the ongoing activities in, the field of metalwork, challenges me to think of further improvements rather than wholesale change. Yet, some changes are inevitable. The tradition of excellence demands that *Metalsmith* must continue to document both the artists and artworks which make the field so vibrant, yet it also encourages me to further challenge readers by exposing and bringing to light individuals, practices, works of art, and issues, heretofore overlooked and which may affect those of us interested in art, metalwork, and jewelry. I am sure that some of the ideas, artists, and artworks to be included in upcoming issues will, as some have in the past, not please everyone. The field of metalwork and jewelry is much too diverse, contentious and even political for that not be the case. But I hope that whatever is finally included between the covers of *Metalsmith* in the future, will serve to make readers think, create, discuss, argue, and celebrate the field of metalsmithing and its related endeavors.

I want to thank some of the many people who have helped me take on this daunting yet exciting task. Interim editor, Virginia Croft was of invaluable assistance during the transition period and I extend special gratitude to her for her patience and generosity. The Editorial Advisory Committee consisting of Donald Friedlich, Martha Glowacki, Susan Kingsley, Bruce Metcalf, and Kate Wagle, have spent and will continue to spend, innumerable hours in conversation with me, discussing everything from the most mundane points of organization to the most illusive questions of aesthetics and artistic practice. For that I am greatly appreciative. The present board members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths took a great deal of their personal time, during their recent meeting in Phoenix, to talk with me about the history of both the organization and the magazine and to share with me their professional and personal feelings concerning what it means to be a metalsmith. Advertising and Circulation Manager Bob Mitchell; Designer Richard Mehl; and Tim McCreight, who served as interim Production Coordinator, all offered advice and assistance during the production phases of this magazine.

Finally I hope that in the future I will be able to thank *you*, the readers of *Metalsmith*. While I am sure that some of us will have widely divergent opinions, I assure you that I welcome your comments and contributions. It is primarily through you that the magazine will continue to develop, grow, and yes, even to change.

Frank C. Lewis

Metalsmith

THE JOURNAL OF THE
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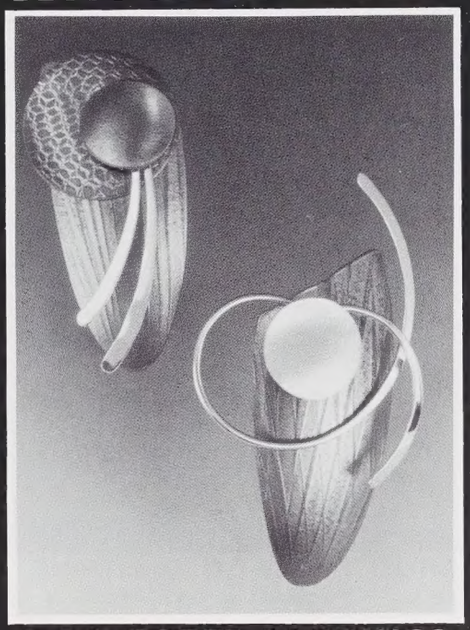

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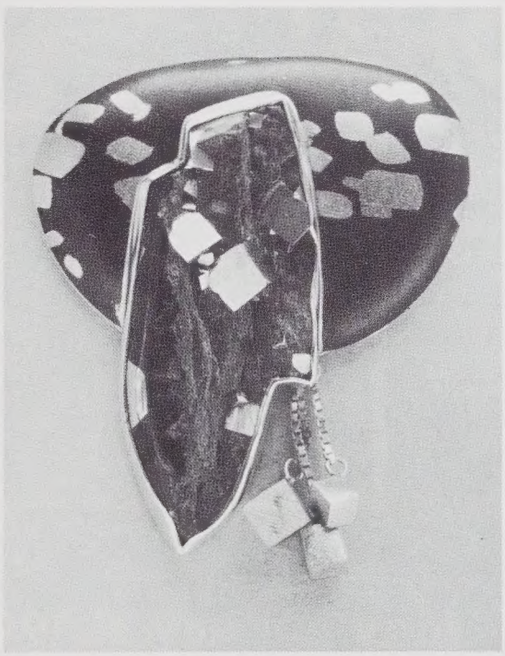

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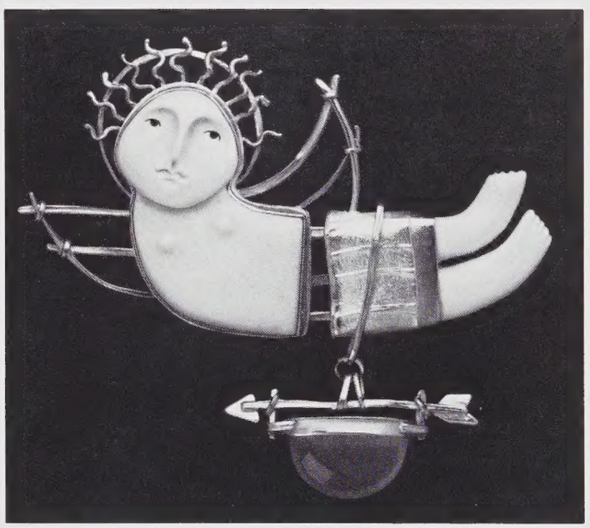

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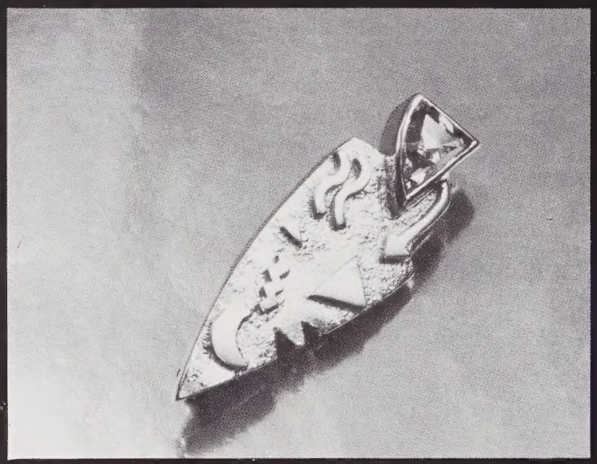

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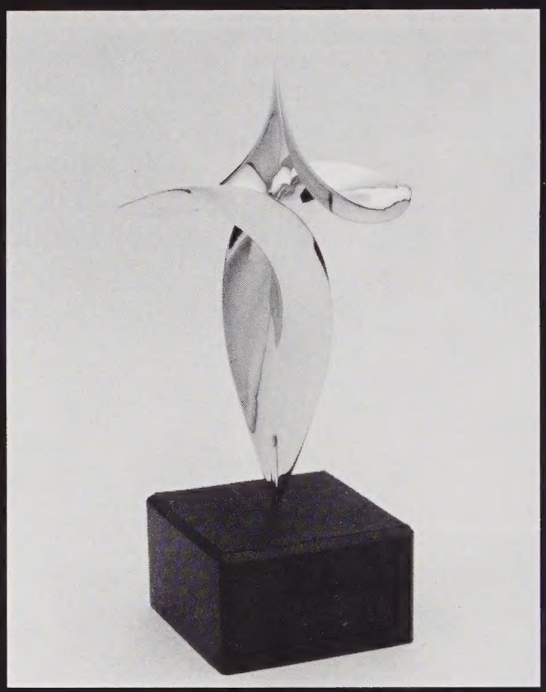

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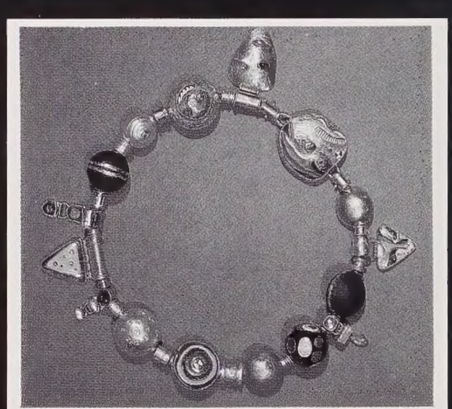

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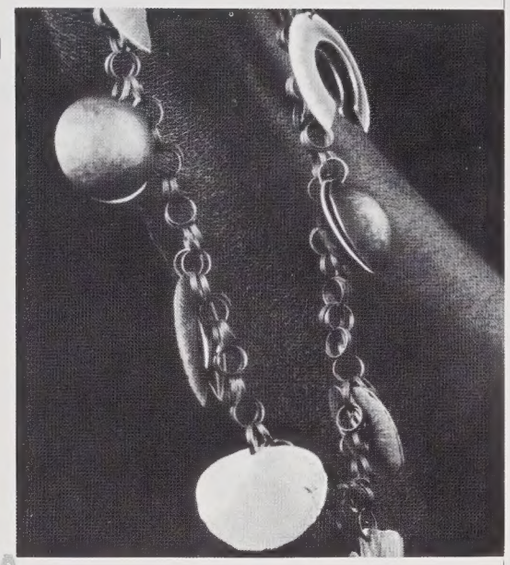

COEN MULDER: Charm Necklace, 1992
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Obituary: Vanessa Lynn

by Jamie Bennett

Vanessa Lynn, 1992

Vanessa Lynn, writer, collector and once gallery owner died of cancer at age 42 on November 20 in New York City. This terribly premature death cut short the life of someone who realized art in nearly every aspect of her life. Vanessa participated out of the desire to understand and from a pure devotion to the power and presence of art. She committed herself to raising the level of evaluation and awareness for works in wood, fiber, clay, and metal.

Vanessa's first serious interest in these media began in the early 70s when she was completing her masters degree in Precolumbian art at Queens College. While studying in Mexico she began to collect Precolumbian and Mexican folk work, particularly pieces in clay. It was obvious, even then, that Vanessa was drawn to works which had a utilitarian basis and in which their material and physical presence was consequential. This acted as the seed which led her, years later, to develop an interest in and purchase works by North American artists working in clay, including Paul Soldner, Peter Voulkos, and Robert Turner. What proved to be equally important to her future however was her study at the University of Rochester, New York. While there she met gallery director and collector Betty Tinlow who introduced her to the works of Hans Christiansen, Wendel Castle, and many other Rochester craftsmen.

In 1979, Vanessa founded and directed Cooper/Lynn Gallery in Manhattan, which exhibited works in clay, fiber, and metal. Vanessa decided to have small group exhibits and one person shows in place of the "craft shop" display. It was at this time that she began to realize how little documentation and serious writing there was in any of these media. In an effort to become better informed, Vanessa deliberately sought information, visual and theoretical, from sources she regarded as important.

In the years that followed, Vanessa closed the gallery and acted as a consultant to a number of private clients. She also began to write for *American Craft, American Ceramics, Ornament,* and *Metalsmith* magazines. She lectured, participated in numerous panels, and began collecting contemporary jewelry.

In 1985 Vanessa was asked to direct the Workbench Gallery, which was the first contemporary furniture gallery in New York. While there she gave a number of now highly regarded wood artists their first exhibitions in New York. All the while she continued to write on clay and metal work. She collected both clay and metal objects vigorously during this period, including works by Earl Pardon, Eva Eisler, Thomas Gentille, Rachelle Thiewes, and many, many others.

I had known Vanessa since 1984, and she and her husband Larry quickly became close personal friends with my wife, Linda and me. I remember first taking her wit and sense of humor as a lack of seriousness; this was quickly and forcefully proven to be an erroneous judgement on my part. Vanessa had no problem letting you know what she thought was working and what wasn't and why. And depending on the language of the antagonizer, she could move from the Kings' English to Long Islandese with effortless intent.

Vanessa battled cancer for most of the time I knew her, as early as 1986. She never lost hope and valued every moment she had and every thing she did. She clearly established herself as an important part of our community, working as our advocate to the outside and a voice of questioning and quality within. She had little tolerance for apathy or critical laziness, and on more than one occasion, she made that clear on these pages. She had little interest in trends or styles and argued for a more stringent critique within our field.

Vanessa's broad background in the arts allowed her to understand the nature of questions that artists ask themselves. Perhaps her sense of urgency and belief in what was genuinely precious: time, contribution, and commitment, allowed her participation as part of a small group of protagonists who sought to raise the level of the quality of these questions. She knew these questions would collectively enrich the essential character of Metal.

Vanessa Lynn was a dear friend and I will miss her challenges, and her good company. For our field this is a tragic loss. Vanessa was a passionate advocate, an insightful writer, and lecturer, who gave us an extraordinary amount in the very short time she was with us.

At the time of her death she was the associate editor of *American Ceramics* magazine.

Jamie Bennett, of New Paltz, New York is an artist and educator.

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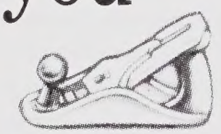

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Counterbalance

by Enid Kaplan

I have just returned from an eight month journey throughout Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, a large portion of which was spent among tribal peoples in Borneo and Irian Jaya, New Guinea. As I began to catch up on the events of the year in the metals world, one of the first articles I came upon was Bruce Metcalf's column "Neo-primitive" in the Spring issue. (*Metalsmith*, "Recent Sightings", Spring 1992, Volume 12, Number 2)

The article disturbed me, although I must say it has provoked some stimulating conversations which, I am sure was one of Bruce's intentions. Despite Bruce's acknowledgment that there are groups throughout the country whom he considers to be "involved in legitimate attempts to re-engage the spiritual aspect of life", I find his overall tone with regard to this movement to be somewhat patronizing and, in certain instances, inaccurate. I also believe he is making light of what these "primitive" cultures do have to offer many of us. I am particularly sensitive to this subject because I consider some of my work to be "neo-primitive" and I also feel a strong personal affinity to other "neo-primitive" metalwork. Rather than reiterate the points already beautifully presented by Harlan Butt, (*Metalsmith*, "Letters", Fall 1992, Volume 12, Number 4) I wish to address some other issues on neo-primitivism that make direct reference to experiences from my journey.

I have been drawn to these cultures and the objects they have created, my entire life, and although my art heroes/heroines range from Giotto to Jonathan Borofsky, the excitement and inspiration I derive from tribal art touches me on an entirely different level. This comes as least in part, I believe, from the spiritual intent with which they were created.

John Perreault, curator of the American Crafts Museum, made reference to this in his article, "Some Moving Points; Thoughts on the Art of Beth Ames Swartz": "The spiritual aspect of art – which some of us believe is at the core of art-making and art-experiencing – has not yet regained its rightful centrality within the critical discourse... Yet if we look at art globally... it is certainly clear that a great many of the objects we admire, even covet, were created for spiritual purposes. We may not subscribe to the particulars of the belief systems that generated these artworks, but the power is there; what we experience is an energy that cannot be explained away by formal anthropological or political analysis."

While many cultures also produce for tourists, this market work is, despite the fact that it employs similar imagery and materials, for me at least, devoid of this power. Something seems to happen when the artist's intention shifts from one of spirit to money.

Clearly there were many points which Bruce made in the article which are well taken and with which I am in agreement. I also believe many people have misconceptions about the nature of these "primitive" societies and that it is simplistic to think that they are not also bound by complex codes of behavior. I also agree that for students to use this as an excuse to create poorly crafted works is a complete misunderstanding and incorrect observation of the objects created by these cultures. However, if I were to encounter either a student or friend who was operating under these misconceptions it seems far more beneficial to suggest ways they could enlighten themselves about what these cultures have to teach them, or I would question them more extensively about what it is that needs expression in their own life and art, rather than dismiss these misinformed searchers as "mall brats" or "the new generation of drop-outs".

With reference to ritual, I disagree with Bruce's suggestion that "An imaginary ritual...only proposes an escapist reverie". Joseph Campbell writes in *Reflections on the Art of Living*, "Ritual concentrates your mind on the implications of what you are doing." In my experience, the value of ritual, whether derived from a long tradition of a particular culture or invented by an individual to impart meaning to some aspect of her life, will be as significant or as insubstantial as the intention with which it is enacted.

Since my trip I have been re-evaluating my role as an artist/healer, particularly as a maker of intimate objects that are placed on the body. I also believe that the current spiritual awakening in this country is not a passing trend limited to a few quirky artists, but is instead a shift in thinking and awareness in people from diverse disciplines that is wide-ranging, profound and long term. I think it is extremely healthy for people to be questioning some of the values and limiting assumptions of Western society. The main reason I travel so much is that I am curious about how other peoples perceive reality and what they can teach me. To this end, whenever possible, I attempt to live among them and to learn their language, both literally and metaphorically.

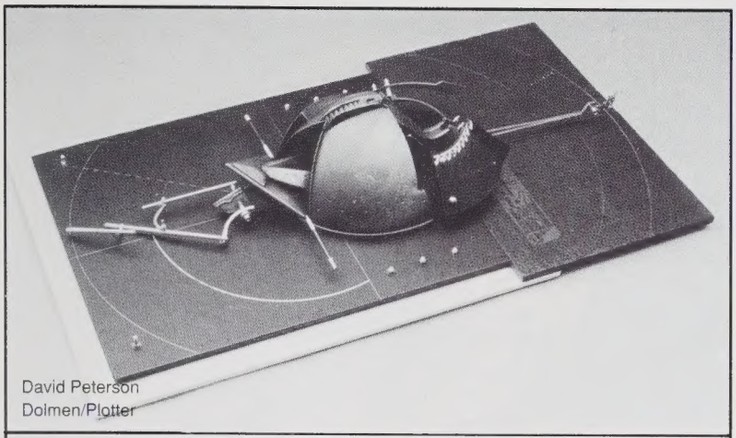
We have made assumptions about what we consider to be "Truth", in terms of our values and vision of ourselves in the world, that may be valid in the context of our society but may not be so tenable in other parts of the world. One need not travel to the other side of the planet to experience this. I am reminded of a time, on the island of Lamu off the Kenyan coast, when a Muslim youth, Mohamad Abdullah Mohamad, said to me in complete innocence, "I understand that, in your country, time is money."

While our society has obviously made remarkable strides in certain areas and has much to offer the world, it is also evident that we are vastly lacking in other equally important areas. By the same token, although it is absurd to glorify these cultures unconditionally, it is equally absurd to not recognize that they have many beliefs about life that could be of enormous value to us and are worthy of our respect.

Although I make no pretense of being an anthropological authority on the various tribes I have visited, I have had a chance to live, eat, speak, and even dance with communities (including Asmat cannibals), over extended periods of time, and I know that there is a great deal they can teach us about their attitudes toward nature, and the realm of the spirit, their sense of community and tradition, and the role of the artist in their societies.

Every culture has unique positive and negative aspects, strengths and weaknesses. The more I see of this planet, the more I am moved by its extraordinary natural beauty and the overall kindness and generosity of the average person. For me, this exploration and respectful exchange is "Paradise on Earth". Perhaps if we could see ourselves as more of a global community on this tiny speck in the universe and work together to integrate and appreciate the wisdom we each have to offer, instead of focusing on power, greed, and cultural chauvinism, we might all have more of a chance to savor this planet's diverse magnificence.

Enid Kaplan is a jeweler, lecturer, and traveler residing in New York City.



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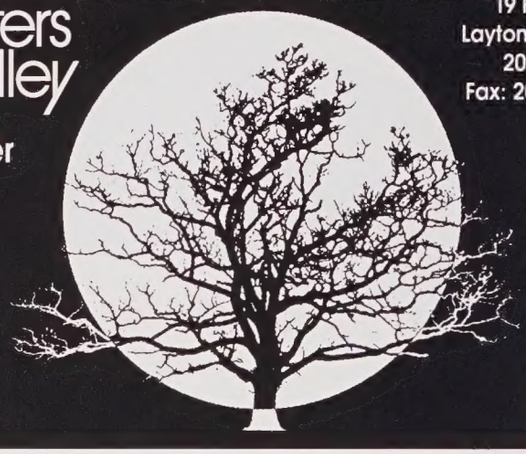

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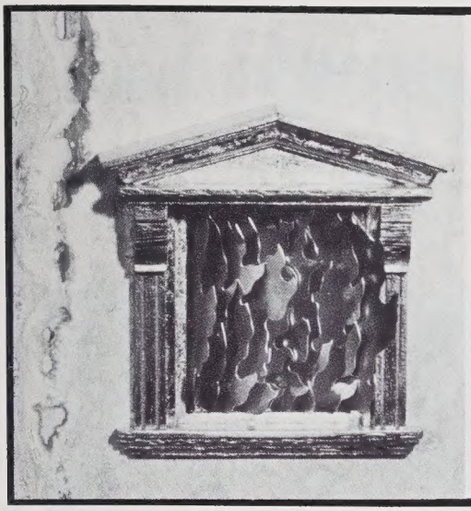

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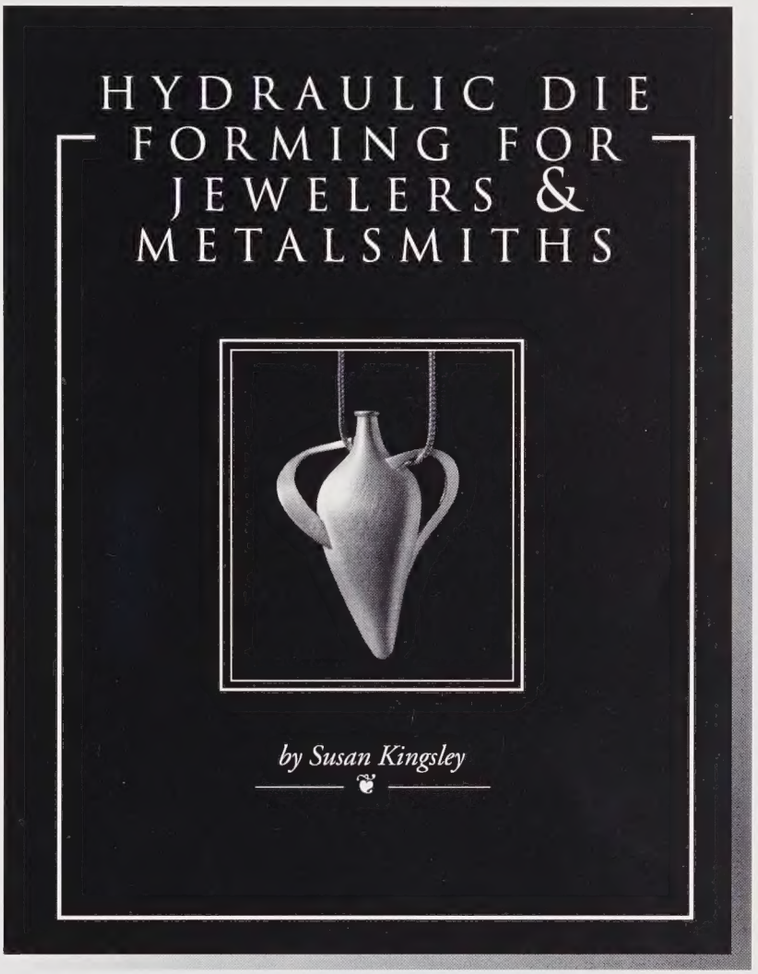

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Narrative The Impulse in Contemporary American Metal

by Beverly Penn

For most of this century, story-telling in art has been considered taboo. From the turn of the century to well into the 1970s, Modernist tradition encouraged instead the investigation of form for its own sake. Art about art was the saluted inquiry and formalist critics denounced narrative content as excessive and indulgent. But in recent decades, artists in all fields have begun to insist that art and life are not unrelated, that art is in fact nurtured by the personal, and these artists have sought to instill their work with the passion of their lives. Narrative has re-surfaced in contemporary art as one means of doing this.

What is narrative?, when is it present in art?, and why does it matter? Literary theorist, Roland Barthes, has written in his *Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*:

> "the narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word 'narrative' covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects, as if any material was suitable for the composition of the narrative: the narrative may incorporate articulate language, spoken or written; pictures, still or moving; gestures, and the ordered arrangement of all the ingredients: it is present in myth, legend, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, painting, ...stained glass windows, cinema, comic strips, journalism, conversation. In addition, under this almost infinite number of forms, the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of (hu)mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives."[1]

The challenge in understanding exactly what contemporary narrative art is, lies in deciphering how it is different from narrative art in the past, speculating as to why it has recently resurfaced, and in recognizing its presence and significance in a post-modern culture that perceives time, space, meaning, and communication far differently than the way they were perceived a century ago.

Basically, narrative art is story art. It is the act of telling a story, not merely creating a figuration of real life. Contemporary linguists, semioticians, philosophers, and critics have all attempted to define exactly what constitutes a story or an event, as they have de-constructed the notions that have previously shaped the way we think about reality. Gerard Genette has written that "...as soon as there is an action or event, even a single one, there is a story because there is a transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state."[2] Though transformation implies progression over time, long-held ideas about the nature of Time, both "psychological" and "empirical", are also undergoing dramatic change. Traditional narrative structure assumed Time was a linear phenomenon with a single direction, in which events from the past cause circumstances in the present and set a direction for the future. If one thinks of a narrative as a series of events which take place over time, and which are structured by a beginning, a middle, and an end, one is assuming a causal chain of events, in which we are moving from the past, through the present, and into the future. But if we are able to understand time as being something other than a trajectory, then the idea of events taking place over time has a different meaning, progression does not exist, and narrative can be a quality of thought, as well as of action.

In contemporary narrative, artists address the complicated relationships that exist both on a personal as well as a socio-political level. We witness work that speaks to common myths, ethical dilemmas, and changing human values. Contemporary narrative art assumes three related, but different structural formats: the allegory, which relates one story under the guise of another; the serial structure, in which individual parts are lined up to form a single story or piece; and the use of words or text with images, to tell a literal story within the work of art itself.

Allegorical narratives are stories which signify something entirely different from that which they represent. They are extended metaphors in which people, things, and happenings have meaning beyond their literal presence. Fred Woell is one of the most significant advocates of the allegorical impulse in metalsmithing. Beginning as early as the mid-sixties, Woell has drawn heavily from popular images in American culture, orchestrating these images into jewelry, objects, and sculptures that sharply comment on the human condition. He is one of contemporary metalsmithing's first allegorists, adding new meanings to images that are familiar to us. He piles fragments of American icons upon fragments and he combines scraps of material culture and creates a weedy, cluttered story line. One characteristic of allegory is its use of the fragmentary, the partial, and the abridged in arrangements that must be decoded or transformed. Twentieth century theorist Walter Benjamin comments on the heroic gesture of allegory to "rescue" lost or discarded bits of information for "eternity,"[3] and, as also pointed out by Craig Owen, on the "common practice" of allegory "to pile up fragments ceaselessly, without any strict idea of a goal."[4] Fred Woell selects the components of his work from the trash-heap of America's consume-and-discard economy, weaving allegories that shock through humor, catching viewers off guard. Narrative force guides his hand in the making of the work, and form comes into being as the story is told. His constructions allegorize with wit and wisdom, steering clear of conventional symbolism.

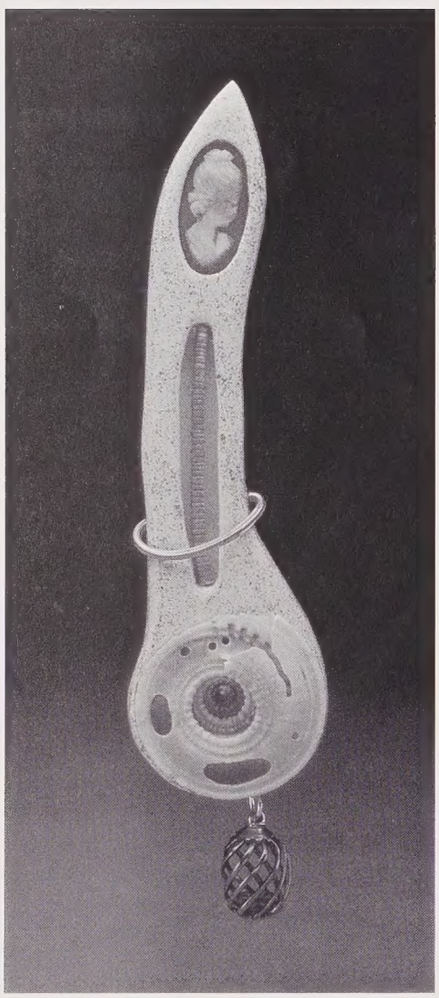
"Have you ever thought of wearing a flat tire?"

J. Fred Woell, Deer Isle, Maine

J. Fred Woell
Lincoln for Congressman, 1967
steel, copper, silver, 3⅛″ d.

"These works are tokens and momentos of my inner biography."

Alan Burton Thompson
New Bedford, Massachusetts



Alan Burton Thompson
Hoop Ghost, 1989
basswood, cameo, shell, paint
5 x 1¼ x ¾"

In discussing allegorical narrative, it is important to differentiate between the allegory and the symbol. Allegories easily lend themselves to narrative, but symbols do not. The words "symbol" and "allegory" are similar, but the two are hardly the same thing. The reason for the confusion is that symbol and allegory, being conceptual pairs, have much in common. Both have meaning or significance beyond external appearances, with one thing standing for another; both are means by which the non-sensory is made apparent to our senses, and both make a connection between the visible and the invisible world. But there is a crucial difference in how each comes to have meaning. The symbol is rooted in visual reality and is specifically derived from that to which it refers. Obvious examples are the symbol of the wedding ring for marriage, or the flag for patriotism. Symbols are, on one level, the essence of something – a particular part of the whole, to which the whole can be reduced. Allegorical meaning, however, is added or signified meaning: for example, the constructed relationship between Venus and romantic love. Allegories existed in Medieval theological teachings and provided specific information about Christianity to the masses; but their specific meanings were supplementary, interpretations externally applied onto a visual image. Allegorical meaning is signified, layered onto an image, rather than produced by the thing represented.

Like Fred Woell, Robert Ebendorf also orchestrates familiar bits of popular culture in his narratives, and Ebendorf too, avoids conventional symbolism. His jewelry and sculptural reliefs are allegories woven from strands of American culture and the details of personal confession. *My Brother and I* pairs the portraits of two young men within the framework of a tiny electrical switchboard. One man's head joins his reposing body in the lower half of the piece, but the other portrait remains a bodiless face. Their relationship is complicated; they are together, yet separated, complete, yet incomplete. The artist draws us close through commonplace images with which we are familiar, yet his narratives remain strangely distant and private. Even in his most recent work, his pieces are like the pages of an intimate diary that are written in a foreign language, confounding our reading.

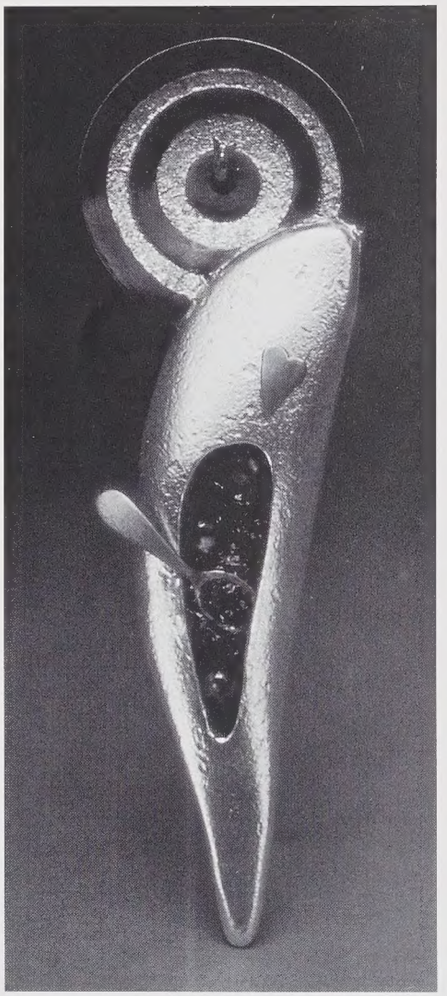
Allegories often refer to intangible forces in our lives – good, bad, love, truth, and luck, to name a few. Alan Burton Thompson is a storyteller bearing witness to the perturbing as well as the pragmatic nature of these issues in our lives. His brooches incorporate colorful, mysterious, charm-like elements into surreal microcosms of fantasy and whim. The work, he says, is about heroism, medals, awards to us all, as survivors of the complex, frightening, exciting, and sometimes difficult art of living our lives. He feels these brooches are reminders of the values that help move us through obstacles and ignorance, toward a richer human biography. In his work, there is an unspoken plea for a return to humanistic issues which, for decades, has been absent in art.

Historically, allegory has been rhetorical and exact in its meaning, and has relied on convention for understanding. But contemporary allegories, such as Thompson's, are read less specifically. The development of a more open-ended interpretation in narrative art had its origins in the eighteenth century, when during the Age of Enlightenment new ideas caused the rejection of dogmatic tradition in favor of interpretive thinking and personal experience. Enlightened thinkers believed that the pedagogy of Christian allegories were, in fact, no more than priestly contrivances designed to control and manipulate the common man. By extolling a more personal translation of all things, including allegories, Enlightenment thinkers were freeing themselves not only from convention, but also from intellectual and physical domination. And even though interpretation may be less exacting in contemporary allegory, an understanding of the rich meanings and significances which allegories offer still demands the participation of an informed viewer.

When looking at Thompson's jewelry, one must be willing to experience the joys and sorrows in their own lives in order to come close to understanding the point of the works. But there is no hierarchy that exposes the logic of the stories. There is no beginning, middle, or end that tells one what is happening. Rather, the works are ordered in such a way that a story forms itself around the piece, rekindling the allegorical impulse with a touch of free-thinking and irony.

In recent decades multi-cultural and feminist art movements have insisted that the personal, the social, and the political are relevant, even essential issues for artists. These movements have been an important impetus for the re-introduction of allegorical narrative in contemporary art. Of equal importance is the fact that feminist agendas encourage the re-evaluation of art history, in order to include the missing pieces of information about women, people of color, and oppressed classes. History and storytelling are traditions that are essentially different from each other. History reduces large tracts of human activity into convenient, symbolic bits that are strung together in a purposeful way to imply a continuous whole. Storytelling, on the other hand, works in an allegorical rather than in a symbolic way, implying larger and more inclusive meaning. As Gertrude Stein stated, "narrative concerns itself with what is happening all the time, history concerns itself with what happens from time to time."[5] While both men and women have always told stories, it has only recently been acknowledged that women have also written history. Critic Lydia Matthews writes that it has been implied that "storytelling and History are sexually specific practices: women tell stories and men write History. While these activities are hardly as gender specific as the word (*His*tory) implies, it *is* true that narrative art has played a minor role in Modernist art history... Formalist critics had little patience for storytelling in art; not until the pluralist discourse of the 1970's and 1980's did the art of personal experience become a viable way to address the radical shifts in gender and ethnic identity that were recurring internationally."[6]

Susan Kingsley is a feminist artist whose allegorical forms are defiantly personal. She uses floral imagery in her jewelry and sculpture, paying homage to this traditional woman's subject matter as well as using it as a metaphor to question culturally conditioned assumptions about women. Kingsley's flowers are larger than life. The images are derived from exotic orchids and carnivorous plants and are stylized in a way that references the organic forms and conspicuous scale of Art Nouveau. These are not symbolic appropriations to enhance formal issues, rather they are historic references that enhance the allegory. Kingsley's brooches are meant to call attention to themselves when they are being worn and to confront comfortable ideas about jewelry when they are being exhibited as objects. She states that her flowers are neither saccharine nor sentimental, nor are they decorative or precious. While they may seem erotic, enticing, and beautiful, they also embody a silent menace. Their intention is to lure, to captivate, and to devour. Their aggression is quiet deceit. An essential part of the allegorical in Kingsley's floral imagery is the fact that the pieces are wearable. As viewers we synthesize what we already know and accept about benign corsages, and the sentimental flowers historically used for jewelry, with our perceptions of these more aggressive blooms, forming a new narrative that allies femininity with power.



Alan Burton Thompson
Guide, 1988
silver, 14k gold, nickel, brass, goldleaf
3½ x 1¼ x ½"

"My pieces are an effort to reconstruct my life and reflect upon current issues as well."

Harriete Estel Berman
San Mateo, California

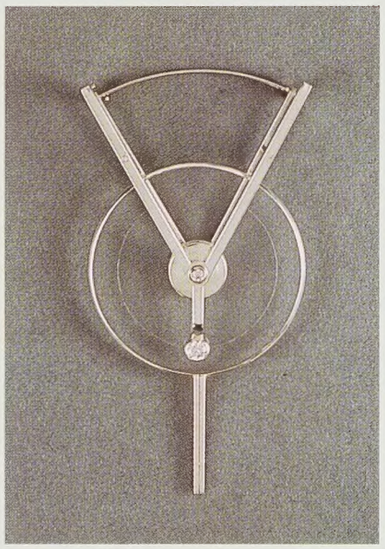
Often in contemporary allegory we are offered the content of the story in a fragmented, non-sequential way, as in the sculpture of Harriete Estel Berman. The absence of a specific story line leaves the text purposely open for interpretation by the viewer, suggesting, perhaps, that more than one explanation is possible. There is no one, specific truth. Berman's work, which she ironically refers to as *Pedestals For Women To Stand On*, are fabricated from printed steel doll houses, cut and rearranged according to traditional quilt designs. Berman's work exaggerates stereotypes of "womanhood" while informing us of the complex, chaotic web that forms any human being's existence. Our point of entry into her twelve-inch microcosms is dependent on our perspective, both psychologically and literally: because the form is a cube, we are prevented from absorbing all the information at once. We may enter at the beginning, middle or the end of this tangled sequence, and our understanding of it is greatly influenced by our own personal experiences.

Bruce Metcalf employs the irony of caricature in his miniature vignettes. He structures his allegories in a conventional way, with subject, object, and verb interacting. The plot is on the surface and readily accessible, speaking directly to the angst of everyday existence. One of the roles of contemporary narrative is to reflect on the complexity and confusion of urban-industrial culture. Metcalf does this by appealing directly to our unconscious, touching our most basic fears and desires. His brooches are mirrors which reflect the stories of both the viewer's and the maker's anxieties of living in today's world. The artist hopes to balance these deeply felt and, as he terms them, more horrendous maladies of existence, such as death, pain, and alienation, with the absurdity of humor. Another aspect of narrative in Metcalf's work is suggested by his compositions, which are much like isolated frames from a film, with characters caught mid-motion, mid-action, midway through the plot. The fact that freeze frames are one of the most familiar ways that visual images refer to larger, more inclusive stories, allows Metcalf's allegories to speak directly and openly and in a language that is more easily understood.

Harriete Estel Berman
My American Kitchen Saves Me Two Hours A Day to Keep Myself Young, 1991
printed steel, folded, fabricated, electric clock, broken dish, 12 x 12 x 12"
Photograph by Philip Cohen

Martha Glowacki
Glasshouse Series: Horizontal Training, 1990
wood, graphite, steel
5½ x 15½ x 12″

Action over time is the essence of traditional narrative, and it is also the point of Myra Mimlitsch-Gray's kinetic *Timepiece* brooches. Both the "empirical" time of the external, physical world and the "psychological" time that exists as a part of human perception can effectively produce a narrative. Mimlitsch-Gray's pieces employ traditional jewelry materials in non-traditional ways. Diamonds are used to exemplify their physical properties as abrasives, shifting the focus from what the stone is, to what the stone does. In Mimlitsch-Gray's brooches, diamonds mounted in small pendulums move back and forth across watch crystals. The body supports these pieces as a pedestal, but it is through the movement concomitant with wearing that the swinging stones carve a path into the glass, precisely scratching away at the vulnerable crystal beneath. The pieces form and re-form themselves over time. The passing of time is one of the strongest narrative devices in literature, film, and theater. In visual art, however, events are often compressed into a single image that becomes the evidence of something that has already happened, or something that is about to take place. Mimlitsch-Gray avoids such traditional plot structure in her work: her brooches are not illustrations of an event, they are the event itself, occurring over and over and over again. As her *Timepieces* slowly etch away at themselves, there is the suggestion that time, which was constructed as a way to measure and regulate our external world, may, in fact, be far more controlling of us than we are of it.



Myra Mimlitsch-Gray
Timepiece, 1989
silver, lens, diamond
3 x 2 x ¼″

The resurrection of the historical is a strong allegorical impulse. Through allegory, artists acknowledge both our distance from the past and the transience of things, and they attempt to redeem what might otherwise be lost in oblivion. Martha Glowacki draws extensively from the rich, narrative tradition of the nineteenth century in her work. While dealing primarily with personal growth and psychological introspection, her pieces are also a response to nineteenth century engravings of vineyard and fruit tree cultivation, developing an allegory which suggests that nature's wisdom can inform human awareness. Contemporary artists find value in historic imagery, but many, like Glowacki, infuse it with personal meaning. This is a clear distinction between contemporary work and narrative art of the past. Paul Schimmel, curator of the exhibition *American Narrative/Story Art: 1967-1977* has discussed this difference:

> "It has been in the nature of art for thousands of years to tell or narrate an event of historical, religious, personal or political nature. From the earliest forms of pictorial story writing...the content was controlled by patronage, but the form was left essentially free. This emphasized the split between form and content that always characterized narrative art – the very schism whose absence anchors contemporary narrative/story art."[7]

While Modernism eschewed content in art for the preeminence of form, Postmodernism heralds the retrieval of the spirit of content in form, a retrieval that links art to life and life to art. This infusion of content in contemporary art characterizes not only allegory, but also other ways in which contemporary narrative is structured.

Left to right

Kate Wagle

Images of Perfection, Gold, 1991
24k gold, framed, 14 x 14 x 2″

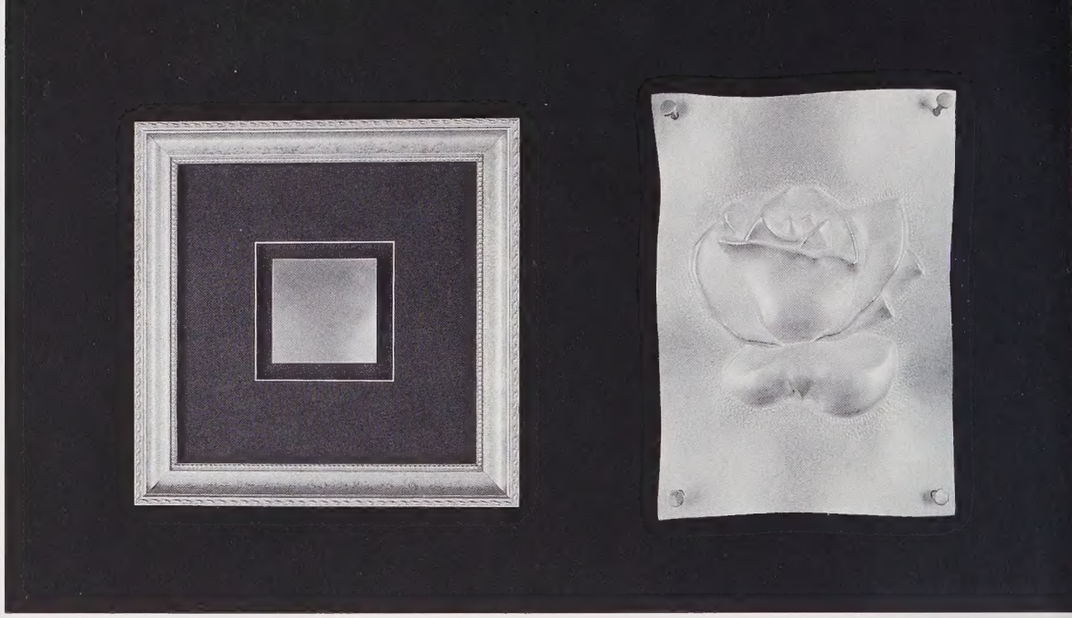
Images of Perfection, Rose, 1991
sterling silver, 6 x 4 x ¼″

Images of Perfection, Diamond, 1991
sterling silver, 3 x 4 x ⅜″

Images of Perfection, Diver, 1991
sterling silver, 6 x 4 x ¼″

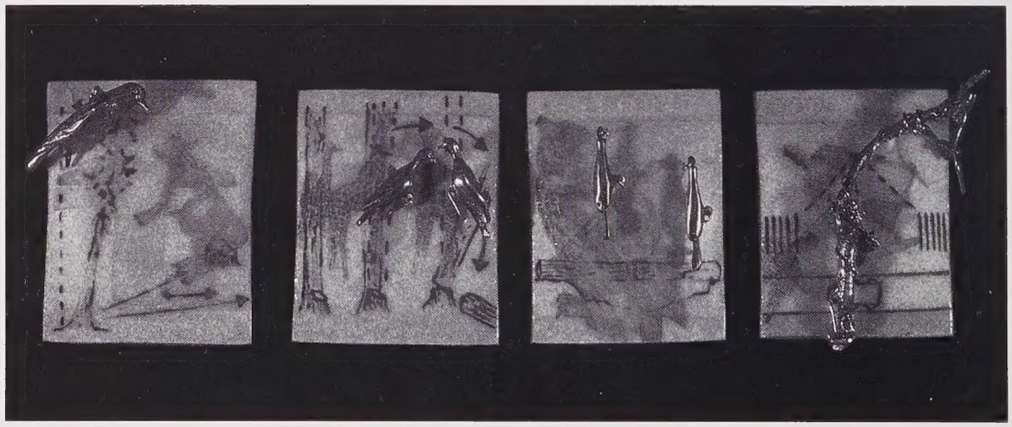
Images of Perfection, Acorn, 1991
sterling silver, 4 x 3 x ⅜″

Photographs by Richard Gehrke



Most visual artists who work within an allegorical framework compress time and events into a single image. Another aspect of contemporary narrative is the series, where individual parts come together to form a single piece. This kind of narrative has a format that has a forked root, so to speak. It draws both from the historical understanding of narrative as one event that follows another, and also from today's "postmodern" preoccupation with taking elements apart, extracting them from the whole, and analyzing them as individual components. In a series, narrative is revealed in the order, duration, and frequency of the individual parts. Roland Barthes points out that to understand this kind of "narrative is not merely to follow the unfolding of the story, it is also to recognize its construction in 'storeys'," as if one were moving through the stories of a building. To read a serial narrative is not merely to move from the meaning of "one word to the next, it is also to move from one level to the next."[8]

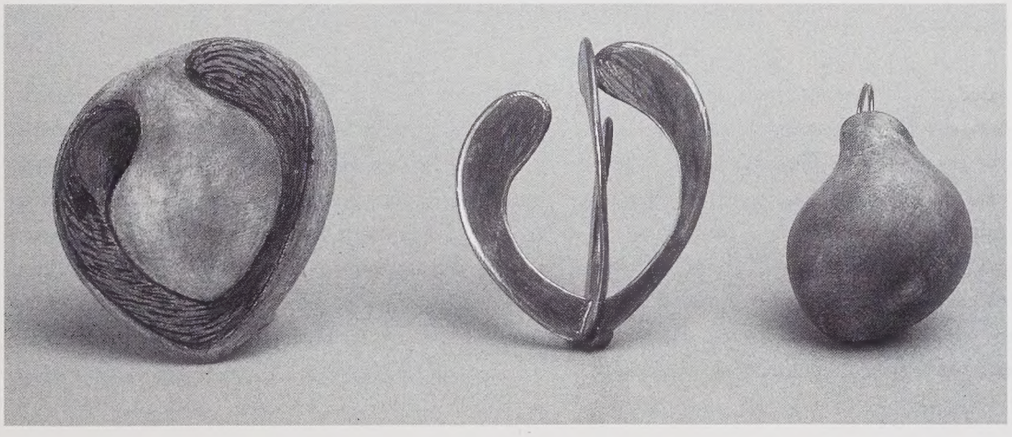
Many artists extend their narrative images into a series of component parts, to heighten the viewer's experience of the unfolding story. Mary Anne Papaneck-Miller's enumerated brooch sequences are melancholic, unpretentious statements that identify her concern for a range of social and political issues. The square format of each brooch in the various series alludes to common methods by which narratives are often revealed, such as photographic images, books, and even television. Though the sequencing of images strongly evokes a narrative, the work does not intentionally reveal a plot. The compelling aspect of this jewelry is Papaneck-Miller's metaphoric use of the visual structure itself: within each of the "freeze-frames" she extracts noun images from the logical sequence of a plot structure and disposes them randomly within the tiny picture plane. Her idiosyncratic organization counters logic in the spirit of Magritte's surrealism. As viewers, we feel encouraged to decipher these narratives, but the pieces remain poignant questions.



Mary Ann Papaneck-Miller
Fallen From the Forest, I, II, III, IV, 1991
1¾ x 1½″, (each)

While Kate Wagle's recent work is allegorical, it also uses a serial structure to convey its meaning. *Images of Perfection* is a series of individual pieces which develop into a kind of poetic allegory when they are mounted on the wall, side by side, in the linear installation that the artist intends for them. In this work, Wagle immortalizes familiar images that we either think of as having a short, perfect moment of duration, like the peak point of a dive, or, in the case of the diamond, as an object that lasts forever. Often artists purposefully use familiar and commonplace images in their allegories, specifically because they imply a multitude of meanings. Craig Owen writes that "allegorical imagery is appropriated imagery. The allegorist does not invent images, but confiscates them."[9] The allegorist, in many ways, is an interpreter. Wagle suggests that solidity and fragility often coexist. The culminating object in this series is a formal and imposing 24k gold sheet. It is all substance with no image, and seen in the context of the other images, it challenges our basic assumptions not only about what we value, but of how we have come to value it.

Many artists use the series in an accretive way, building narrative meaning as individual parts add up to a whole. Often the meaning of one piece can only be inferred by viewing it in the context of an entire series. Jill Slosberg-Ackerman's *Living in Two Worlds* is an ongoing series in which she explores dualities. The first pieces in this group, she explains, were made in 1981 after hearing art historian Leo Steinberg discuss a Picasso self-portrait, in which the head is conveyed in the round even though the painting as an object is obviously flat. It occurred to Ackerman that adornment could be rendered more meaningful if earrings ceased to be a matched pair, and were instead two separate objects which refer to each other, and complete an idea. Her pieces, in either pairs or trios, are metaphors in the larger narrative of the on-going series. Such an extended work, expands the artist/viewer interaction greatly over the interaction afforded by a single image.



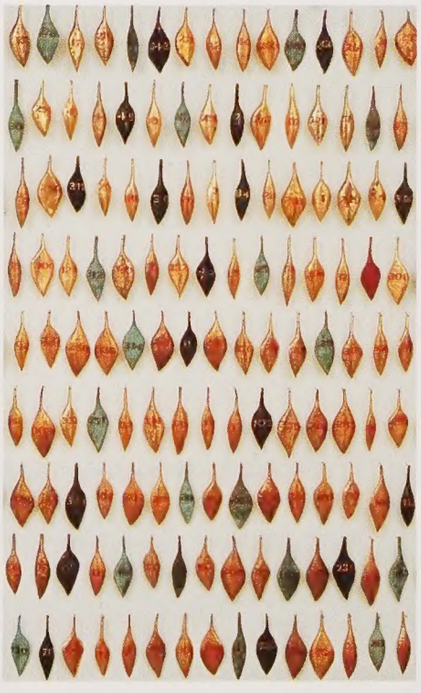
Jill Slosburg-Ackerman
Living in Two Worlds, 1992
maple, pigment,
silver, ebony, steel, 1½ x 1½"

Susan Hamlet
Brooch Series: Basic Math +, –, =, x, 1990
14k gold, lead, 2½ x ¾ x 3/16″

In Susan Hamlet's brooch series, each separate unit has meaning, but viewed in sequence, they push us to assume a larger narrative. The series *Four Seasons*, made of gold and lead, juxtaposes an exterior, dehumanized, robot-like form with varying interior cutouts. The changing forms inside each piece represent a growing, developing, interior self and a personal evolution which parallels the cycle of the seasons. Beginning with *Fall*, the cutout is a fissure. It becomes a ghostly apparition in the second brooch, entitled *Winter*. The internal shape evolves into a transitional figure in *Spring*, and finally emerges as a tentative young woman in *Summer*, the last brooch in the sequence. Another series, *Basic Math*, collectively forms an equation, utilizing mathematical symbols in the interior to represent the systems which standardize, clarify, and, ironically, confound our lives. One paradigm for narrative work is the mathematical progression. As Angus Fletcher writes:

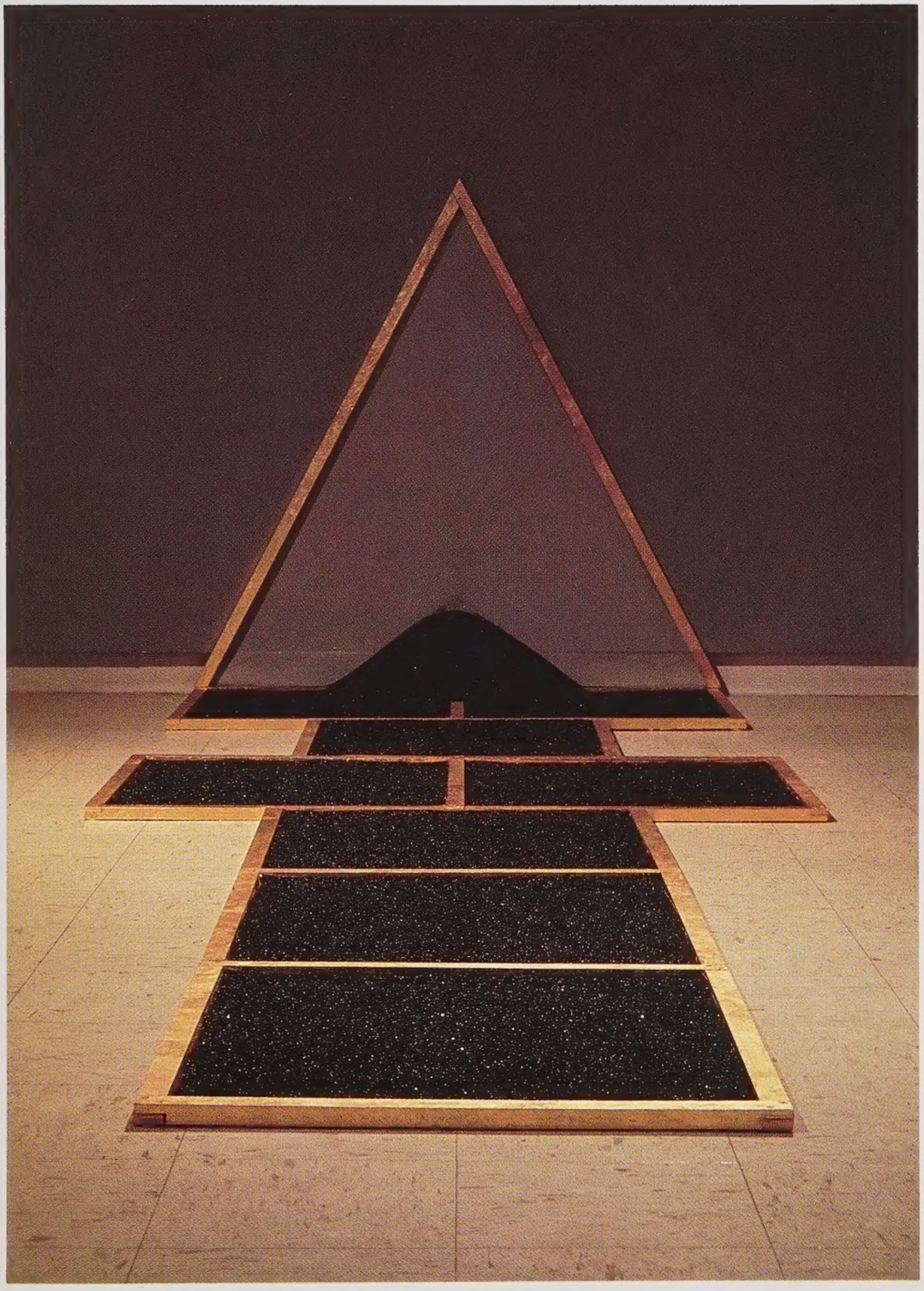
> "If a mathematician sees the numbers "1", "3", "6", "11", "20", he would recognize that the 'meaning' of this progression can be recast into the algebraic language of the formula: X plus 2^x, with certain restrictions on X. What would be a random sequence to an inexperienced person appears to the mathematician a meaningful sequence...This parallels the situation in almost all (serial narratives)."[10]

Shari Mendelsohn
Calendar (detail), 1990 - 92
gold leaf, copper,
copper nitrate, paint, 96 x 48 x 1½″



Shari Mendelson uses a number of structural devices for her narrative effects. At a basic level, she reduces elements to pairs, encouraging a dialogue between them. In some cases the elements are mirror images, conversing in their mutual isolation. In other pieces, Mendelson matches a form with its opposite, or several other counterparts, suggesting the necessity for difference in arriving at harmony. In the installations *Calendar* and *Sins*, she abandons the structure of sequence for a more complex serial structure. Both of these pieces repeat a single element many times and then these elements are arranged into a grid. The minimal changes from one element to the next encourages a careful reading of the entire piece to find the meaning of the narrative. A grid pattern is another method of recording time, and it is a way to allow the viewer to create his or her own time and order in their perception of the work.

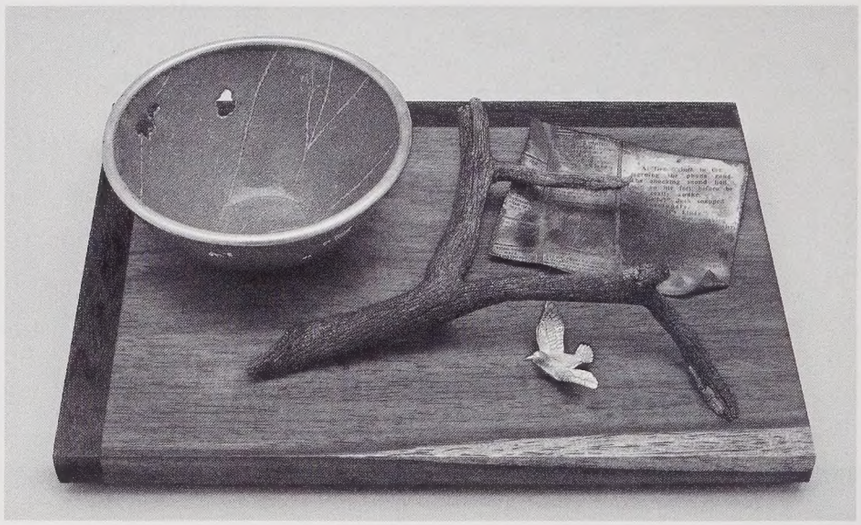
Since narrative often comes out of structures in which one event follows another, as in film or literature, almost any sequence of images is capable of evoking a narrative. It is in this way that narrative can extend beyond representational and figurative imagery, into pure form. Such is the case in the work of Hai-Chi Jihn. In Jihn's work sequencing is sometimes ambiguous: a reading from left to right is as logical as reading from right to left. She may also direct us through a series of visual frames toward a projected goal, as in her sculpture *Hopscotch*. We move through this work in an immediate, visceral way, jumping visually from grid to grid, recalling our particular memories of this childhood game to which the title refers. Here, as in most work that uses a serial structure, the viewer is an active participant in the unfolding narrative.



Hai-Chi Jihn
Hopscotch, 1991
wood, sand, gold leaf
20 x 42 x 27″
Photograph by Richard Gehrke

"My pieces are like Chinese proverbs, to be understood one metaphor at a time, and then as a whole."

Hai-Chi Jihn
Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin



Harlan W. Butt
American Koan #1, 1992
wood, copper,
enamel, silver, 4 x 10 x 6″

The sequencing of information is a conventional narrative structure that has roots as old as Egyptian steles and Roman panel paintings. Narrative structures that incorporate text have a similarly long history. For centuries, artists have been combining words and images for a variety of purposes. From the wall reliefs of ancient Egyptian temples, to the inscriptions on the *Column of Trajan*, to the descriptions of the lives of the saints in Renaissance painting, and up to the words or word fragments in works by Picasso, Magritte, Duchamp and others, language has provided clues or context to the reading of visual imagery. With the profound infusion of printed media into contemporary life, artists of the past three decades have particularly used language and word imagery in their art as a way of bringing their works closer to contemporary, human experience. Much of this recent work examines the very nature of meaning and communication; some work investigates the relationship between words and their visual equivalents, and other works use a combination of the verbal and visual in a narrative way to tell a story or describe an event. Artists whose intents are narrative ones, may employ the conventional use of explanatory text with a sequence of accompanying images, or they may explore more innovative methods of revealing a narrative. Short captions and phrases that either augment and/or contradict an image, and the use of commands, directives, and instructions, all engage the viewer in the task of deciphering what has happened, what is happening, and/or what is about to happen.

Jean Loy-Swanson
To The Victor, 1987
plexiglass, enamel, ink, gold filled wire,
beads, amethyst, 31 x 30 x 5″

In Jean Loy-Swanson's work, words and images are used simultaneously to form the narrative. Loy-Swanson looks to Medieval metalwork when fabricating her ornate, chain mail athletic supporters which are hung like trophies in shadowbox showcases. One word labels or short descriptive phrases such as "TIME" and "MAN OF THE YEAR" are incorporated into these mini-displays embellishing the pieces and recalling parade floats or amusement park rides. Standardized typefaces are transformed with colors of gala-red and gold. Loy-Swanson's narrative is not a specific story, but rather a generic, repetitious tale of victory at the expense of innocence. While these commemorative displays recall the ongoing human narrative of winning and losing, the historical reference to Medieval regalia also calls into question long held modes of oppression that continue to permeate the values of contemporary culture. The text and images in the works have a reciprocal relationship: the words, presented in standardized typefaces and glitzy colors, evoke imaginary scenarios of commemoration and institutionalization, while the sculptural forms provide specific and literal references. In one piece, the phrase "To The Victor Go The Spoils" is printed over and over again, reiterating that this narrative of war, conflict, and domination repeats itself interminably, each time as energetically as if it had never happened before. The text in these works is not separated from the image as in the caption of a picture and the words suggest a specific reading of the piece, a reading that offers a humorous, almost sardonic interpretation of ever-repeating human tragedies.

Pamela Lins
Legal Alien, 1988
22k gold, wood, copper, glass
12 x 12 x 6", (each)

In Asian art, the narrative tradition has often paired text with imagery. In Japan, for example, the "poem-painting" has been a tradition that has flourished since the twelfth century, when it first appeared. This narrative form commemorates particular events or stories by identifying the thoughts of the figures depicted within the paintings. Having lived several years in Japan, Harlan Butt finds particular influences in this long tradition. In genres such as the Japanese "poem-painting," each work had a specific intent, but in postmodern times, narrative is more likely to be idiosyncratic, laced with double meanings, and informed by the artist's personal experience. One of Butt's installations, entitled *10 Bulls in a Quantum Field*, is a series of ten wall-mounted reliefs that combine the verbal and the visual in mutually supplemental ways. *10 Bulls...* is Butt's interpretation of the *10 Oxherding Pictures*, a traditional series depicting the ten stages of enlightenment in Zen Buddhism and a series that has been painted by many Asian artists. In Butt's contemporary interpretation, each relief has a resident text that reads as a poetic caption to the images. Image and text work together to reveal the story of the artist's relationship to his work and the specific nature of his creative process. As in his other work, Harlan Butt chooses a traditional narrative format to elaborate on the relationship of his objects to the rituals from which they are derived. The artist also serves as narrator of the written story. Viewers move in and out between the images and the text, which together create memory-filled narratives, that are poignant, meditative, and personal.

"Language and visual imagery each conveys a different experience of the world: when used together as layers, a third mode of expression is created."

Harlan Butt, Denton, Texas

Pamela Lins explores a variety of innovative ways by which the combination of words and images can tell a story or describe an event. Often, the text is somewhat obscured and fragmentary as in Lins' *dish stories*, in which crater-like bowl shapes hermetically confine an array of visual and verbal information in various stages of decay. The collection of words and images inside the bowl's rim is offered randomly. We may arrange them into whatever narrative we choose, and we are free to change or reverse that order at any time, depending on the information we bring to the piece. Each viewer extracts new and different scenarios. In this work the text is used as an ambiguous element that produces a quandary, rather than using words as a clue for deciphering specific meaning.

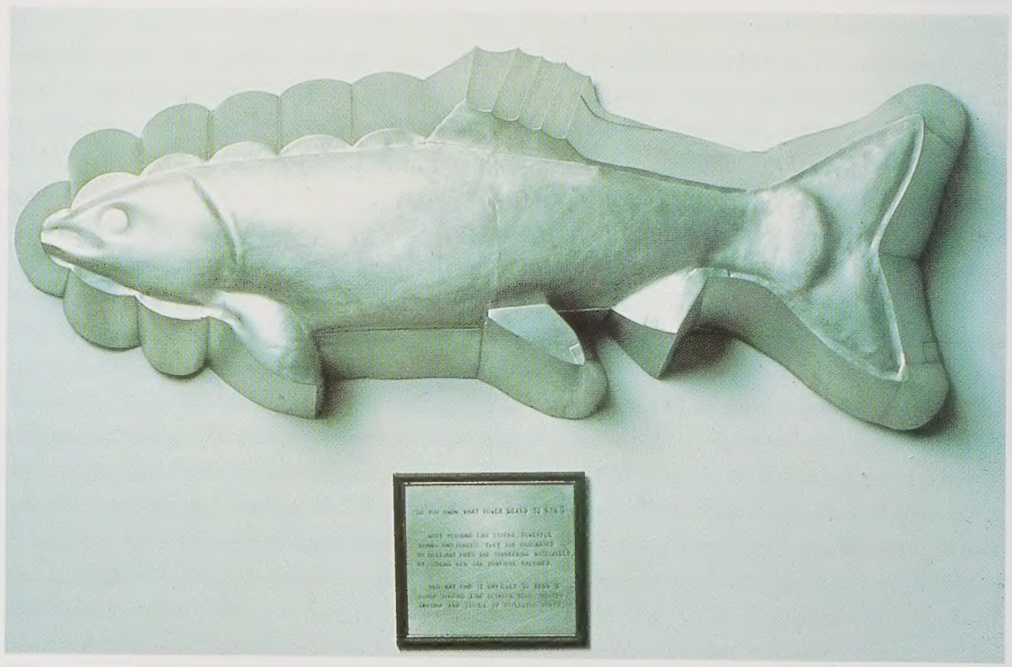
In more recent work, Lins puts text against form, setting up incongruous relationships that prompt open-ended discourse as viewers bounce back and forth between word and image, image and word. Lins confronts us with a dissected syntax in *Legal Alien.* In the diptych, framed, copper vessels rest formally on pedestals placed in shadowboxes behind glass. The title floats authoritatively and imposingly on the surface of the glass, obscuring our view of the enclosed contents: "LEGAL" conceals a Western style cup and plate, while "ALIEN" shrouds a Greek amphora. Because the two words are separated from each other by the framing device, we examine both the phrase and its separate component parts. In addition we inevitably see the words in relation to the vessel forms. As we flip back and forth we are caught in a narrative suggesting ethnic identity juxtaposed against the myth of our culture as a melting pot Both of these readings recall the personal and the public experiences of cultural transition. As in her other works that investigate the dynamic exchange between words and image, text spurs an on-going narrative in our minds as we compare, contrast, and scrutinize the relationships of the parts to the whole.

"In my work the words are typically reflective of didactic 'trusisms'; the voice of authority in a gender dominated culture."

Lisa Norton
Chicago, Illinois

Text functions as a kind of narrative counterpoint in Lisa Norton's works, which the artist calls "projects". Each of her pieces pairs an oversized, but ordinary, utilitarian object, such as an umbrella, a pail, or a pitcher, with a framed, wall-hung image. Norton fabricates the objects in non-precious metals using techniques which originated in early industrial society. She constructs the wall images to resemble blueprints, rather than traditional drawings or paintings. Phrases and instructions are embossed on the sculpted objects and stenciled on the accompanying diagram, which is mounted on the wall behind the form. The diverse catalogue of quips and phrases that she pairs with each object calls into question the power of language to direct meaning and to influence the interpretation of visual forms. Each of the remarks paraphrases a stereotype of understanding, and each verbal gesture suggests a narrative, particular to the lifestyle that has informed that stereotypical point of view. The works are summations of a multitude of narratives, each narrative culminating in a perfunctory quip. Everyday assumptions and the absurdity of assuming and accepting succinct or specific definitions are the issues which Norton addresses.

Sportsmanlike Project is a sterling silver "trophy" in the form of a gigantic fish-shaped jello mold. Its accompanying text states: "YOU MAY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO DRAW A SHARP DIVIDING LINE BETWEEN GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP AND THE THRILL OF REFLECTED POWER". "Is the narrative about ethics or abundance?", we ask. *Studying Lost Time* is an over-sized colander on which terse quotes are printed; such as: "LOST TIME OCCURS WHILE WAITING FOR SOMETHING TO HAPPEN" and "THE ANTIDOTE IS USEFUL OCCUPATION". The old wives tales, poetic clichés, and truisms that accompany this object reflect the myriad interpretations associated with such commonplace forms. These words also suggest the narratives of those that speak such clichés. Each object triggers familiar memories, and a second narrative, embellishing the first emerges. The objects Norton represents often enter the circuit of collectibles, and thus they are assigned a value disproportionate to their intrinsic worth, due to scarcity, impracticality, or simply nostalgia. The value or meaning of the object is thus determined by context. Viewers identify with this assigned meaning by placing themselves in the particular narrative of whatever marketplace has assigned this worth. Though text embellishes these "projects", Norton's use of language is far from decorative. Instead she uses language to set up relationships which engage viewers in narratives that question the methods by which we prescribe meanings in life and in art.



Lisa Norton
Sportsmanlike Project, 1988
pewter, 19 x 51 x 6½"

Narrative art since the 1960s has been highly personal and emotionally charged. Kathleen Browne's jewelry is embossed with captions and appropriated texts that add additional narrative meaning to her already suggestive figurative imagery. "Last summer the fruit hung ripe and full and loosened to the touch" is the caption for a succulent but ambiguous, figurative form bearing pendulous breasts of dangling baroque pearls. The interaction of language and form suggests a specific reading of the narrative. Browne draws upon Medieval reliquaries as a source of inspiration. Her text is stamped directly and clearly onto the surface of the metal, recalling the outer surfaces of reliquaries which are embellished with the lives of the saints. *High Tide*, for example is in the form of a sarcophagus, a container similar to an ossuary. The inside container of *High Tide* holds what appears to be the remains of the body referred to in the anecdote printed on the lid. The passage states:

> "My mother was told that she had been an Egyptian queen in a former life and that she had been driven to take her own life, by walking into the sea, as a result of a failed love affair. She met her former lover in this lifetime and they dated for awhile but the spark was gone."

The interaction of words and images in Browne's piece is a straightforward multi-telling of the tale. Though fictional, this artist's work is specific and personal. While it is possible for us to bring many of our own experiences to the pieces, Browne weaves viewers into the maze of her own particular dream-web. While her work touches on the bizarre and the fantastic, she is still a storyteller in the most traditional sense.

The resurgence of narrative in contemporary art follows no single rationale and no specific chronology, though there is a correlation between the concern with narrative content and the end of Modernism and its attendant avant-garde. "Modernism above all exalted the complete autonomy of art, and the gesture of severing bonds with society," writes Suzi Gablick.

> "Today, remaining aloof has dangerous implications. We are all together in the same global amphitheater. There are no longer any sidelines... The old assumptions about a nuclear ego separating itself off from everything else are increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of our changed circumstances. Exalted individualism, for example, is hardly a creative response to the needs of the planet at this time, which demand complex and sensitive forms of interaction and linking."[11]

It is understandable that because of the catastrophic events of the late twentieth century it is no longer possible to see history, or art, as a progressive process where the past is simply something to be overcome and the future bodes something better. In a kind of postmodern schizophrenia, the future looms dark and unclear and the past seems too unreliable to serve as a foundation. Deconstructing notions of the efficacy of the past and the future in the present situation, and evolving a new, less self-aggrandizing paradigm for the present is a primary concern of many contemporary narrative artists.

Narrative art in the postmodern age follows no credo of style or singular motive. It is essentially concerned with encouraging a broader understanding of art in its larger relationship to life, beyond pure aesthetics and the progress of a hermetic art history. With its history situated within the applied arts, jewelry/metalsmithing, has always existed in the space between art and life, and the work of recent narrative artists in the field strengthens that relationship. The narrative impulse connects meaning to form, a meaning that is directly relevant to the issues of our lives. Above all, it tells us that it is still possible to find significance and compassion, as well as aesthetic substance, in the drama, pathos, and humor of stories.

Beverly Penn is a metalsmith living in San Marcos, Texas.

Notes

The author would like to extend special thanks to James Bennett for his editorial insight and encouragement in the development of this article.

1. Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1988), 14.

2. Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983), 19.

3. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977), 223.

4. Ibid. 178.

5. Gertrude Stein, *Narration* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), 30.

6. Lydia Matthews, "Stories History Didn't Tell Us," *Artweek*, no. 22 (February 14, 1991), 1 – 5.

7. Paul Schimmel, from the "Introduction," in *American Narrative/Story Art 1967-1977* (exhibition catalogue),(Houston: Contemporary Arts Museum, 1977), 4.

8. Roland Barthes, *Image – Music – Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 87.

9. Craig Owen, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Post-modernism," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed.by Brian Wallis (Boston: David R. Godine, 1986), 205.

10. Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964), 174.

11. Suzi Gablick, *The Re-enchantment of Art* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 5 – 6.

PHILLIP BALDWIN

Forged Alliances

BY MATTHEW KANGAS

Now that The Year of American Craft is here, the list of artists deserving immediate recognition and overdue scholarship is long. Each field – clay, glass, fibers, wood and metals – has a different set of needs and a different rate in the development of critical commentary.

Within metal arts, there seems to be a division between writing about narrative jewelry – active, seductive, interpretive – and writing about non-jewelry metals such as knives, forged iron, and architectural ornament. Both areas require deep material involvement and expertise. These hard-won abilities of process can often overwhelm the critic's requirements for formal analysis, aesthetic judgment and evaluation, and interpretation of meaning.

That is, there's so much about the making of a craft/art object to write about that there seems to be little time or space left to write about its context, content, and quality. If there is any one goal for critical writing in The Year of American Craft, it should be to bring the latter qualities into better balance with the former. Meaning and judgement must catch up with process, material discussion, and biography.

Taken as a test case, then, the art of Phillip Baldwin suggests how these approaches can be successfully combined. The 39 year old knife maker and iron sculptor lives near Seattle and is an active member of the long-respected Pacific Northwest craft community. A Puget Sound area resident since 1983, Baldwin has conducted numerous workshops around the nation at leading craft schools: Penland, Oregon School of Arts and Crafts, Arrowmont School of Crafts, Alfred University, and at prominent national and regional conferences: ABANA, SNAG, New England Blademakers Guild, and the Northwest Blacksmith Association.

As a result of his participation in a two-year research project on the Japanese precious metal, pattern process, *mokume-gane*, at his graduate school, Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, Baldwin is known as an authority on the topic, as well as recognized as a producer of the exotic laminated metals for other artists through his company, Shining Wave Metals, founded in 1983 in Springfield, Missouri, where he was living at the time.

Given that extensive technical background, what does Baldwin's art look like – and mean? For one thing, his work takes on an extraordinary range of appearances. An early wrought-iron sculpture, *Interrupted Helix*, 1976 is an arduously arched series of bars which recall fellow New York sculptor David Smith's work of the mid-1940s. Reared in Northport, Long Island, Baldwin benefited from his mother, Nancy Baldwin, who is a professional potter, and from frequent trips to Manhattan museums and galleries.

The highly abstracted *Interrupted Helix* suggests Baldwin's modernist phase came early, along with *Screen*, 1979, an eight-foot-high mild steel construction which combines circular forms and curves, and the smaller *Asparagus Grille*, 1979, which bends vegetal forms, creating a rudimentary horizontal grid. A self-taught blacksmith, Baldwin also ventured briefly into jewelry or body ornament with his 1976 *Wedding Crown*, a startlingly beautiful silver tiara with branch and leaf shapes.

PHILLIP BALDWIN
AT THE FORGE, 1992
SNOHOMISH, WASHINGTON STUDIO
PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK VAN S.

It was a 1976 American Craft Museum exhibition curated by Jim Wallace, *Solid Wrought*, however, which piqued Baldwin's interest in other metals. After initial inquiries, an invitation to attend S.I.U. soon followed. Once there, Baldwin recalls, he stopped making sculpture altogether because "formalistic exercises were not interesting," and he shifted to architectural metalwork for a while "because of a greater need in society," and made his first *mokume-gane* piece, a small lidded container, in 1977. A few jewelry pieces resulted from these first Japanese experiments but, more importantly, functional tableware and a carving set with ivory handles were made at this time. The path to knifemaking was assured and apparent.

Coming to the Pacific Northwest in 1979, fresh out of graduate school, Baldwin first worked in Portland as a resident craftsperson at Oregon School of Arts and Crafts. Besides an umbrella rack, architectural hardware, and site-specific pieces such as an exterior balustrade, Baldwin concentrated more and more on blades. Firmly involved in knife making by 1984, when he joined the Knifemakers Guild, Baldwin quickly became dissatisfied with his successful commercial knives, the *Field* line of steak knives, ham slicers, and skinners and daggers for hunters. Gradually, he combined a growing desire for imagery with his substantial ability to create exotic layered metals.

Baldwin's "early maturity" phase began with a sword *Blade Breaker*, 1980, using outlined spheres as ferrule and handle base. A folding knife of 1984 used *shibuichi*, inlaid gold, and silver and an ivory handle. As the forms became more complicated within the rigid functional requirements, so the materials became more lush, regal, and mysterious.

Spear, 1981 and *American Reply*, 1985 are doggedly aggressive in content and form, suggestive of the intertwining lines of Celtic illuminated manuscripts or medieval English wrought iron. An axe with blades pointing in opposite directions, *Going and Coming*, 1981, is especially barbaric and vicious-looking. It is as if, by evoking the cruder history of the tradition, Baldwin was carrying on a dialogue with his anonymous predecessors. This would not last.

By the late 1980s, Baldwin entered his current "decadent" or "palaceware" period. Richly ornate, sleek and intimidating his art since 1988 makes clear why the artist prefers the appellation "aesthetic worker" instead of craftsman. These works are a belated (120 years late) addition to the American Aesthetic Movement, (1860-1875) in the decorative arts. Whether gold, titanium, *mokume-gane*, opals, or woods like ebony and rosewood, the materials take on a deeply symbolic character of their own, invoking both ritual ceremonies of an imaginary world, or fetish-points for the private fantasies of his new patrons from Italy, Japan, and the United States.

In a way, the artist has come full circle from *Interrupted Helix*. Having begun with functionless sculptures, later forsaken as "formalistic exercises", Baldwin now makes swords and knives so elaborate and beautiful, they discourage use – and hence, become sculpture by default.

Betrayal of function? Distortion of art? No, Baldwin seems to be having it both ways. Material involvement and presence of process are so blatantly evident that they go beyond function into dazzling virtuosity. At the same time, the sheer exquisiteness of workmanship is always tied to use through its form, thus elevating its appreciation to a symbolic contemplation of the blade.

The collaborations with sheath and handle maker Jim Kelso of Worcester, Vermont, confirm the indeterminate historical allusions to prior decorative arts styles: Aesthetic Movement, Art Nouveau, Japanese Edo, or Momoyama periods. Always evocative and never specifically allusive, joint efforts such as *Autumn Dagger*, 1990 and *Magic*, 1992 summon up worlds beyond the recognizable heritages which may have influenced their making.

This creation of an imaginary universe is what distinguishes art from craft to finally arrive at that thorny but unavoidable issue. Assertion of aesthetic status, alone, can never guarantee such conferral. It is the combination of masterful making, oblique reference points in history, and the infusion of personal visions into the object, which lift the work into the realm where the best of any medium finally arrives.

As his skills grew and flowered, and his individuality of vision matured, and these qualities became successfully transferred into his swords, Phillip Baldwin became an artist. He stepped onto the bridge between art and craft, a bridge undergirded by the iron of work but decorated with the precious metals of the imagination.

Far left
Magic, 1992
(PHILLIP BALDWIN AND JIM KELSO)
FANCY CROSS-SECTION
PATTERN-WELDED STEEL BLADE
WITH SINUSOIDAL TWIST PATTERN;
STERLING SILVER GUARD
WITH 18K GOLD AND OPAL;
STERLING SILVER FERRULE
AND TANG WRAP;
CARVED EBONY GRIPS
WITH GOLD AND RAY-SKIN INSETS
20 X 2½ X 1″
IVANO COMI COLLECTION, LECCO, ITALY
PHOTOGRAPH BY ROGER SCHREIBER

Left
Future Harvest?, 1992
CARBON STEEL BLADE;
WOOD, RATTAN, RAWHIDE
AND PIGMENT HANDLE
14 X 5 X 1″
COURTESY OF THE ARTIST,
SNOHOMISH, WASHINGTON
PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIAN F. RUSSELL

Matthew Kangas, Seattle art critic and curator, contributes to Art in America, Sculpture, GLASS, American Ceramics *and other magazines. He has also written about Albert Paley, David Smith, Richard Serra, Robert Maki and other metal artists.*

Frederick A. Miller

A Precarious Balance

by William Baran-Mickle

Over the last several years museums from around the country have been quietly purchasing sterling hollow ware made by Cleveland silversmith Frederick Miller. One of the most recent acquisitions was a silver and ebony pitcher collected by the National Museum of American Art for its Renwick Gallery. In fact, during my visit to his studio and home, Miller apologized for only being able to show me one bowl and one silver service in his personal collection. The reason for this quiet rush to acquire Miller's work is not that his style is suddenly in vogue (again); rather, it is the realization of the value and importance of this artist's creativity and originality. It is an acknowledgment that Miller's works are, in fact, classics among works by mid-twentieth century, American silversmiths.

Although collectors have recognized his achievements for 45 years, what interest does Miller's work hold for metalsmiths? The general style of Miller's hollow ware is rooted in European and Scandinavian ideas of form and function introduced in the United States in the late 1940's. The artist's forms stood out then as they stand out now, as some of the best of the genre. Frederick Miller put an American face on the influential style associated with the historic Handy and Harman Workshops.

Fred Miller's story is interwoven with professional pursuits, friendships, and a devotion to preserve his creative abilities despite numerous pressures that could have compromised the integrity of his art. Perhaps the most important single element that has allowed this integrity has been his friendship with the artist John Paul Miller. This personal and professional relationship began roughly 56 years ago when the two Millers began separate pursuits in art and design at the Cleveland Art Institute in 1936. To this day both Millers work side by side in a well organized studio in Fred's home, outside Cleveland.[1]

In the 1930s, Frederick Miller found himself on a road into uncharted artistic territory. As a child, Miller had been fascinated with making model airplanes, but his interest was in technique more than creativity. He was a member of a national society and he concentrated on replicating scale models of non-flying airplanes.[2] Two artistic influences in his family were his grandfather, an inventor who made beautiful objects in wood, and his aunt, who was a "capable painter" and with whom he spent some time.

Miller's involvement with metals began when he learned how to hard solder from a friend who had learned the skill at a summer camp. In Miller's high school chemistry lab he refined the new found skill of using an alcohol lamp and blowpipe. In a demonstration of parental support, Fred's mother traded small batches of her silver, souvenir spoons to a local manufacturer in return for silver sheet. Fred would then experiment with making watch-faces, inlaid jewelry and even rudimentary, seamed hollow ware. After high school, Fred worked as a professional photographer for 3 years in Akron, Ohio, and he won several awards for his photo-murals. In 1936 he entered the Cleveland Art Institute in pursuit of a career in design.

Right
Beverage Pitcher, 1961
sterling silver, ebony
Courtesy: Renwick Gallery, National Museum of American Art.

Although Miller did not take any jewelry courses while at the Institute, he did experiment with enameling with Kenneth Bates who had joined the faculty in the late thirties. Confident with his design abilities and with the metalsmithing skills he had learned from as many sources as he could find, Fred sought a position in the silversmith and design area of Potter and Mellen, Inc., a fine furnishing and jewelry store founded in Cleveland in 1899. As there was no opening at the time, Miller turned to teaching at the high school level for a year before enlisting in the Army in 1941. Miller was placed in the Signal Corps (Intelligence), and he remained there for nearly 5 years.[3]

Within two years of leaving the military, the artist entered into four life-long commitments. The first was his employment at Potter and Mellen, Inc. of Cleveland beginning in 1946. The second was a return to teaching, this time at the Cleveland Institute of Art. The third was the pursuit of his own works of art in silver. The fourth, though certainly not the least, was his family, which by 1946 consisted of Mary, his wife, and their two children.

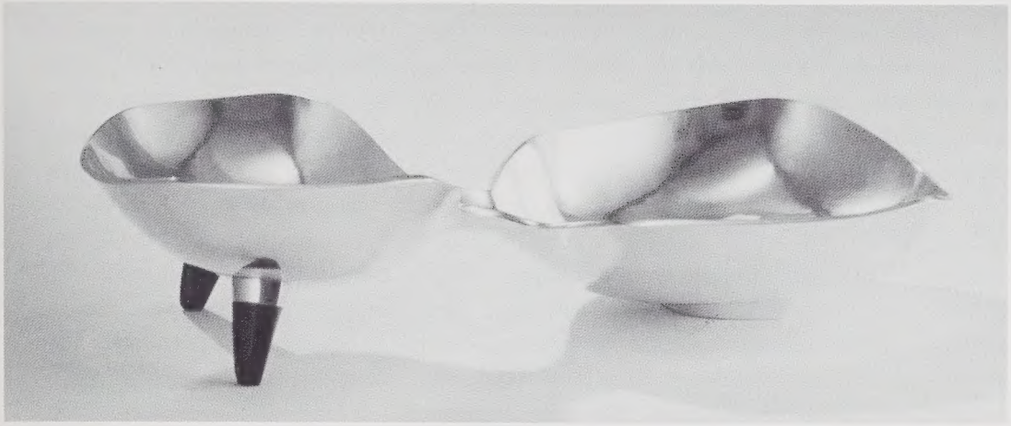
Miller joined the Cleveland Art Institute as an instructor in silversmithing and jewelry in 1947, and he continued teaching there until his retirement in 1975. With the strong support of the school's director, Laurence Schmeckebier, Miller's personal work flourished. He used the Institute's studio as his primary work space until he built a studio in his home in the mid–1960s. When the artist first joined the school he reorganized the metals department. Later, when a new building was built for the school he designed a completely new metals studio, including facilities for hollow ware. The artist is proud that at one time he had former students working as designers in every major silver company in North America. A number of his students would also become chief designers in industries such as automobile manufacturing; at that time the connection between craft and industrial design was much closer than it seems to be today.[4]

Fred Miller enjoyed teaching very much and for many years he was able to create his personal work in the school's shop in the evenings and on weekends. Because of both his teaching schedule and his job at Potter and Mellen, studio time was precious. His numerous commitments also meant that his work output was modest. In 1975 Fred decided to retire, in large part, because he felt there was a change in the collective student body. In essence, his students wanted something that was out-of-sync with his own ideas concerning materials, workmanship and design. Perhaps he also had sensed the impending shift away from the methodological, rational attitude of the Scandinavian and Modern influences that had predominated during much of his career.

Free-Form Bottle, 1971
sterling silver,
23k yellow gold decoration, 7″ h.
Photograph by John Paul Miller

The year Fred began teaching, he entered and received an award in the historic *Cleveland May Show*, sponsored by the Cleveland Museum of Art. He continued to receive awards in this show for 21 consecutive years. Because the *May Show* drew national attention, Miller did well. The artist also still speaks appreciatively of the vision of the museum's director, Dr. William Milliken. "He was the most universal appreciator of all, [of] everybodies' efforts, regardless of whether they were [in] fine arts, crafts, sculpture, ...whatever it was." Beginning in 1949, the Museum was the first institution to collect Miller's work, and eventually they came to own 9 works. Yet, well beyond the Museum's patronage, Milliken promoted Miller's work, helping the artist build a clientele. Miller has enjoyed a steady demand for his works in both jewelry and hollow ware for decades.

Fred Miller's relationship with Potter and Mellen, Inc. lasted 31 years. Beginning in 1946 with an offer from Mr. Mellen to become the principle designer and Vice President, Fred thrived. He eventually became President and later an owning partner of the firm. At one time, the silversmith shop employed up to four jewelers and silversmiths, making stock and custom jewelry, ecclesiastical silver, tea and coffee pots, and serving pieces. During his time at Potter and Mellen, Miller brought in Solve Hallqvist, a silversmith who had been trained in Sweden by Baron Erik Flemming. Miller especially enjoyed designing, which included interaction with clients. The challenge for him was to find a design that the customer was pleased with while also satisfying his own artistic sensibilities. He eventually shifted his concentration from hollow ware to the design of custom jewelry, with a particular interest in "intaglios." Miller traveled with some frequency to Europe and Scandinavia as a buyer for the company, searching for lines of jewelry, hollow ware, and flatware as well as crystal for the store. Miller evidences great pride in the work he did for this unique establishment.



Bowl, 1964
sterling silver, ebony, 9 x 4"
Photograph by John Paul Miller

Above all else, it seems Fred Miller enjoyed the material: sterling silver. He felt it could do anything, and to this day he loves the stretching method of raising, which is one of the most rigorous of the silversmith's techniques. Fred was widely credited with re-establishing the stretching technique in America in the 1950s. He has been cited in a number of publications, and he wrote a technical article on the process for *Craft Horizons*. Fred has also made two technical films in which he demonstrates the stretching process.[5]

As much as he was attracted to the technique, however, he would hardly claim to have rediscovered it. In fact, the artist gives credit for his inspiration and knowledge to Baron Flemming, who led the second Handy and Harman workshop in 1948. Miller had declined Margaret Craver's invitation to attend the first workshop, feeling it was not the right time to go. A technical film by William Bennett, who led the first conference, helped Miller decide to attend the later workshop,[6] and it was there that Baron Flemming completely changed the artist's outlook on design and technique. It was, perhaps, due to Miller's lack of formal training that he so readily absorbed the technical and philosophical suggestions Flemming offered. "Baron Flemming was the most inspirational teacher I have ever known and the short contact I had with him gave me a clearer insight into the potentiality of the material than I'm sure I could have obtained from any other teacher."[7]

Looking back from the vantage point of the 1990s, Miller's style and forms seem traditional or Modernist. However, in the 1950s, he was pushing the style and content of metalsmithing toward new boundaries. Chief among these developments was his exploration into the use of asymmetry. Before the Handy and Harman conference, all Miller had known was cylindrical and even form: the "logical" form for seamed hollow ware. Yet after his experience with Baron Flemming, Miller allowed raising techniques to aid in establishing the shape of the form, enjoying the concept and practice of more free-form design. He also enjoyed the freedom of not making sketches, which he never really cared to do. These newly learned skills allowed the artist to participate in the contemporary art world by creating – within certain functional boundaries – artistic abstractions which were becoming prevalent in the artistic crucible of the 1950s.

By the beginning of the 1950s, the artist had received national acclaim through exhibitions, awards, articles, and films. At that time, he was a mature artist in his forties and he was included in many of the early exhibitions that sought to define a new craft era, including: *Contemporary Form in Hand-wrought Silver* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1950; *Fiber–Clay–Metal*, 1953, and 1954; the *Wichita Nationals*; and *Objects USA*. Two important early solo exhibitions were held at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in 1961 and at the Henry Gallery of the University of Washington in 1968.

Miller is best known for silverwork that consists of free-form bowls; a series of bottle forms; elegant, candlestick groupings; and a variety of water pitchers, vases, and coffee and tea services. The free-form bowls are of special significance as they appear to have broken some of the rules of design and decorative applications in hollow ware which were then in place. Going beyond the lack of a predetermined profile or shape, and in an unusual partnership between technique and design, Miller applied a field of flowing engraved lines to the interior of the bowl. This accentuated the overall undulating form, extending the aesthetic depth of the bowl and creating a new dimension in silversmithing.

Free-Form Fruit Bowl, 1964
sterling, ebony, engraved interior, 13 x 5½"
Photograph by John Paul Miller

Miller was largely unaware of the existence of any narrative content in these works, however, a case may be made that they reveal his love of nature and its processes: a love which was developed through years of wilderness trips in the Western regions of the country. Miller did not work at Potter and Mellen in the summers as it was simply too hot, and at that time, there was no air conditioning at the store or at the school. The academic schedule also allowed for time off in the summer and Fred and John Paul often took that time to venture into the untrampled wilderness. Just as it seems obvious that John Paul's jewelry represents a deeply felt love of nature, so too do Fred's bowls remind one of rivers, rocks, trails, flowing water, and lakes. It is this author's theory that Fred's love of free-forms was derived from these trips into nature, and the strenuous technique of stretching metal, used for much of Fred's personal works, gave access to the spirit of solitude and rigor he so enjoyed in nature. This technique thus provided the balance to offset a full schedule of teaching and of working for Potter and Mellen.

The bottle forms are also reminiscent of more free-form aesthetics, even though they were designed via actual scale models. These models, which were carved in wood and layered with plasticine, allowed calculations for a suitable amount of metal to be made. The bottles were asymmetrical and severely necked-in and applied, decorative elements were used to add distinctive interest to the relatively small forms.

It can be said that Miller's vases, pitchers, and candle sticks are as classically elegant now as when they were first created. All of Miller's silverwork is well made, structurally strong and respectful of the material. It is a mistaken conception that works by silversmiths such as Miller and Hans Christensen, prominent in the fifties and sixties, were designed to be purely modernist and functional. Fred Miller contends that, above all else, the material must be worked with integrity. With this admonition in mind any artist may push the boundaries of form, content, and function. John Marshall, a former student of Miller's, is just one whose creativity in silver continues to celebrate this noble material and the legacy of Fred Miller. Marshall remembers Miller as "a real craftsman, possessed of a dedication that makes him unable to accept anything less than the best. He was a mentor *par excellence*."[8]

Water Pitcher, 1958
sterling silver, ivory, 10" h.
Photograph by John Paul Miller

Fred Miller's influence is important not only because of his forms and techniques, but also because of his passion for his work and the way he has lived his life. In both his life and his work one can see an ethic based on the balance between prudent decisions, work, personal creativity, family, and the value of nature. Keeping the sparks of creativity and personal integrity alive, as Miller has done, provides lessons that are still relevant to other artists working today.

> "I'd like to believe that the most important aspect of my own work would be a consistency of feeling I try to give each piece....I cannot feel that [the] cultural or physical environment is unimportant, but I do believe that any creative person is largely motivated by something much more personal and intangible, and perhaps not definable."[9]

It is symbolic that on one of Fred and John Paul's earliest vacations to the Western wilderness they observed a young fellow across a lake, climbing a rock formation, and taking photographs with a bulky camera. They learned later that the photographer was Ansel Adams, an aspiring artist. Adams embodied the courage of a true pioneer, using his vision to celebrate nature and to reshape American society while practicing respect for his chosen medium. At 80 years of age, Frederick Miller continues to enjoy nature and to hold on to his vision in his chosen work of jewelry and silversmithing.

William Baran-Mickle is a writer and metalsmith living near Rochester, New York.

Notes

All personal information is taken from a taped interview between Fred Miller, John Paul Miller and William and Nancy Baran-Mickle on July 30, 1992 at the Miller's studio in Brecksville, OH.

I'd like to thank Sarah Bodine, former Editor of *Metalsmith*, for encouraging me to pursue this article; Betsy Douglas who generously shared her own research on Mr. Miller from 1987; and Jim Mazurkewicz who was a student of Mr. Miller, taught along side him for five years, and who now works as a jeweler and silversmith at Potter and Mellen, Inc. Finally, I greatly appreciate John Paul Miller's invaluable advice and recollections in support of his colleague.

1. For a biography of John Paul Miller which includes a discussion of his relationship with Fred Miller see: Roland Crawford, "Master Metalsmith: John Paul Miller", *Metalsmith*, 1984, vol. 4, #4, pp. 22 – 25.

2. Taped interview between Fred Miller, John Paul Miller and Betsy Douglas, 1987.

3. One of Miller's assets has been that he has always sought out techniques of interest to him. For example, after art school he learned metal spinning and he "picked up" rudimentary engraving from a brother-in-law. Before assuming duties at Potter and Mellen, Miller visited a number of East Coast silver manufacturers, of these, Stone Associates of Massachusetts was most influential.

4. For important statements concerning the relationship between crafts education, career, and industry, see: Arthur J. Pulos, "Metalsmithing in the 1940s and 1950s: A Personal Recollection", *Metalsmith*, Spring 1983, pp. 20 – 23. (Miller met Pulos in 1948.)

5. Most of Miller's hollow ware was raised using the stretching method. A technical account of this process may be found in, "Fred Miller Makes a Silver Bowl", *Craft Horizons*, 1956, vol. 16, #6, pp. 37 – 39.

6. The *National Silversmithing Workshop Conference* was sponsored by Handy and Harman Co. of New York, between 1948 and 1951. The 1948 conference was lead by William Bennett, who concentrated on English methods of crimping and angle raising. The 1949 conference was lead by Baron Flemming, silversmith to the King of Sweden. He concentrated on the stretching method. For an article that describes the 1949 workshop with process photographs of a bowl by Fred Miller, see: Margaret Craver, "An ancient method goes Modern", *Craft Horizons*, Winter 1949, vol. 9, #4, pp. 15 – 17.

7. Irvin Whitaker, *Crafts and Craftsmen*, Dubuque: Michigan State University, 1967, p. 89.

8. "John Marshall: A Conversation with Patterson Sims", *Metalsmith*, 1991, vol. 11, #3, p. 16.

9. Whitaker, p. 90.

Reviews

Gael and Howard Silberblatt
Triptych #3, 1992
reversible, 18k, 24k gold, cloisonné
1½ x 2 x ⅛″

16th Annual Philadelphia Craft Show

Philadelphia Civic Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
November 4 – 8, 1992

by Dorothy Spencer

Offering everything from the innovative to fresh interpretations of the obvious, from the conventional to the fantastical, the 16th Annual Philadelphia Craft Show opened November 4, 1992 to a record-setting attendance and, according to a poll taken among exhibitors, record-producing sales in what had been noted as a lackluster year for the art market as a whole.

The show, recognized as one of the most prestigious juried craft shows in the United States, set another record this year, having received submissions from over 1,650 artisans. And from that exceptionally large number, the work of only 175 were selected to exhibit. Of those exhibiting their work, 52 were categorized as either jewelers or metalsmiths, and these artists filled nearly one-third of the show's booths. This may be why seven of the fourteen prizes awarded went to metalsmiths.

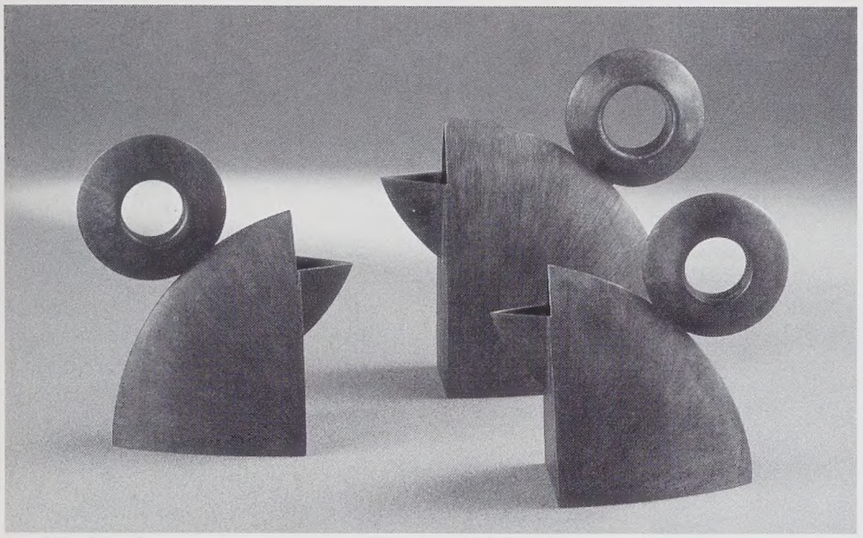
The show's first prize went to Gael and Howard Silberblatt of Lake Worth, Florida, for their highly original cloisonné jewelry. Their collaboration created one-of-a-kind pieces using 18k gold settings with 24k gold cloisonné images. Many of the pieces were reversible, showing images on both sides of pendants and bracelets. Miniature in scale, with most under an inch in height, the designs were reminiscent of Renaissance triptychs and Medieval altar pieces, although the subject matter was very contemporary. Montages of cats, dancing dogs, bathing beauties, and skyscrapers juxtaposed among colorful, mosaic-like backgrounds, were elegantly framed in gold. All of the individual pieces were superbly crafted and they reflected the artisans' mastery of their techniques.

Lilly Fitzgerald of Spencer, Massachusetts won the Franklin Mint Prize for Excellence in Jewelry Design. Her brooches and pendants were beautifully executed examples of goldsmithing. Her work is very simple in design; most of her brooches of 22k and 24k gold are circles. Their settings of pearls, seed pearls, diamonds, and other gemstones such as lapis lazuli provide the dominant focus. The colors set the mood.

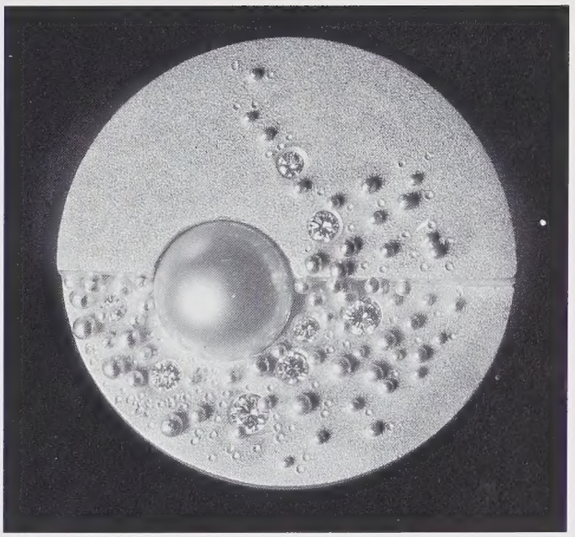
Another top prize winner was Randy Stromsoe of Cambria, California. Stromsoe, who won the Rolex Prize for Excellence in Metal, was the last master craftsman to apprentice with Porter Blanchard. He exhibited a group of well-crafted bowls and pitchers. One series of darkly patinaed pitchers, ranging in size from 7 x 4½″ to 12 x 7½″ were unusually designed, their wedge-like shapes much more sculptural than the usual postmodern combinations of hard-edged and semicircular and circular lines. In his creamers, he carried this geometric wedging to a greater extreme, reducing the design to just three shapes: circle, triangle, and arc, creating a set of individualized pieces. Stromsoe's command of the media, (he works in both sterling silver and patinaed pewter) coupled with his own personal interpretations, made an impressive exhibit.

Works ran the gamut from cast jewelry to very individualized, one-of-a-kind pieces, Among the more popular examples, the "techno-romantic" work of jewelry designer Thomas Mann, as usual, provided a fresh approach to cast jewelry with expertly constructed necklaces, pins, and earrings that were miniature collages created from industrial materials coupled with photographic images.

At the other end of the spectrum the serenely elegant, one-of-a-kind, silver teapots of Michael and Maureen Banner evoked the curvilinear lines of German Art Nouveau. The subtle curves of these objects, their sweeping, fluid lines, and the pristinely designed, cloisonné lids that completed each piece, were superbly fabricated.



Randy Stromsoe
Circle Handle Creamers, 1992
pewter with dark patina
5½ x 8″ h.



Lilly Fitzgerald
Starlight Starbright, 1992
24k gold, pearl, diamonds, seed pearls
Photograph by Jonathan Kannair

Other exceptional objects were the works of Ken Carlson. At a distance his pieces reminded one of the teal green, rush-woven, Native American vessels indigenous to the marshland regions of South Carolina. Only on closer inspection did one realize these richly patinaed baskets had been meticulously woven from copper strips. The artist's command of the material along with a mastery of the intricacies of weaving techniques was obvious in the simple, yet sophisticated designs which made the pieces unique.

Eric Olson's fabricated pewter vases, bottles, teapots, and goblets, were highly stylized and many were exaggeratedly geometric in shape. Skillfully-crafted, they provided a fresh insight into the use of a centuries-old medium.

The show, which seems to grow larger in size and better in quality each year, represented a very high level of quality and craftsmanship spread over a significantly broad-based area of design arts. One highly individualized interpretation of jewelry design could be seen in the work of Pat Flynn. Elegant and meticulously-crafted, his pieces juxtaposed common found objects, such as rusted nails, shards of discarded slate, and pieces of barbed wire with diamonds, gold, and other precious and semi-precious metals and stones. These unlikely unions created profoundly unusual yet exceptionally beautiful objects – Flynn quite literally rearranged the ordinary into the extraordinary.

The sculptural work of Didi Suydam provided another aspect of the show's diversity. Her sterling silver and gold pieces were both objects and pendants. Each piece came apart to reveal a chain contained within. These elegant, reductivist pieces were unencumbered by jewelry findings – pure, abstracted forms, that could also be worn.

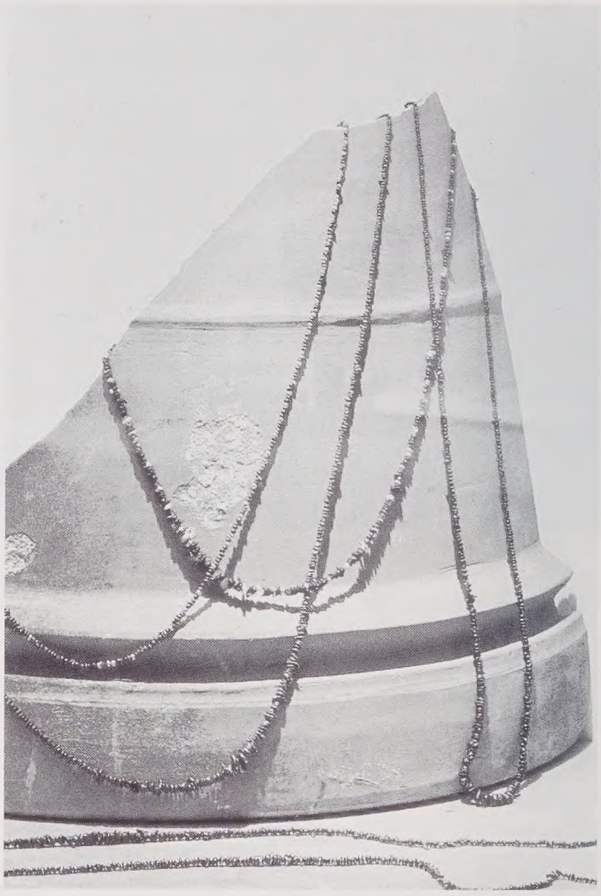
Equally unique were the hinged and sculptural containers by Ron Hinton. Created from bronze, copper, brass, nickel silver, as well as various combinations of metals, these boxes incorporated the traditional function of boxes with angular forms and planes that projected into space. Even the hinged lids seemed less a part of the function and more a necessary and sometimes surprising part of the form. Images of landscapes, including aerial and satellite photographs, computer-generated contour maps, and graphic patterns were photo-etched onto many of the planar surfaces. These beautifully crafted objects were as functional as they were stand-alone, abstract sculptures.

With so wide and diverse a group of exhibitors it was impressive to see such a high level of quality. The artists revealed an impressive depth of knowledge of the extraordinary variety of mediums used, and their capabilities were reflected in the many innovative methods of handling and manipulating the materials. It is rare when such a broad spectrum of interpretative styles and vocabularies representing the many provocative directions within this field are found in one exhibition. The Philadelphia Crafts Show provided such a vehicle.

Dorothy Spencer is a writer living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

RIGHT
Vaduz Leaf Necklace, oxidized bronze

FAR RIGHT
45″ *Grain Necklace,* oxidized sterling silver and vermeil; 47½″ *Grain Necklace,* oxidized sterling silver; 36½″ *Grain Necklace,* coral, pearl, oxidized sterling silver and vermeil; 42½″ *Grain Necklace,* oxidized sterling silver; 59″ *Grain Necklace,* oxidized sterling silver; 49½″ *Grain Necklace,* oxidized sterling silver



John Iversen

Art Wear
New York, New York
October 15 – November 12, 1992

by Lanie Lee

The crux of John Iversen's exhibition was formed around the inner workings of nature. Iversen's work captures the subtle, structural variations and color transitions of geology and biology in such a way that the perception of the parallel between the artist's own evolution and that the evolution of nature is unavoidable. Works created in the early eighties up to the present may have denoted different styles and materials (from the copper and enamel used to make solid rock-like forms to the delicate, linear leaf shapes made from oxidized bronze and nickel silver) but they never strayed too far from their models in the natural world.

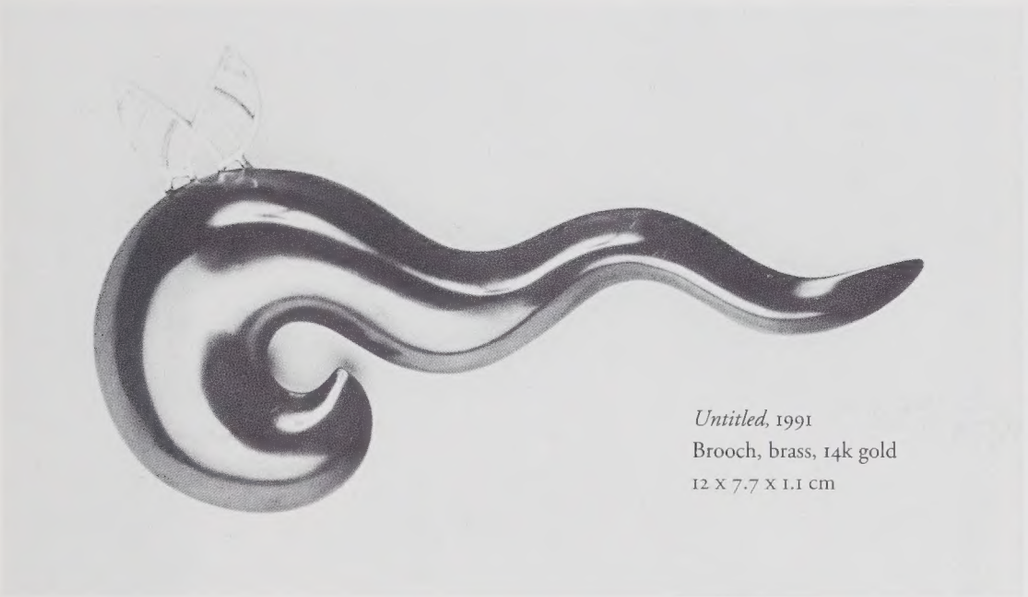
In both the jewelry and the functional objects (candle holders and bowls), one could see many of the basic patterns found in nature. *Bronze Cuff,* a wrist piece of oxidized bronze (1986), has thin strips that curve into a sphere; spaces in between the strips enable viewers to see the entire form. The apparent randomness of each curve, and what seems almost like imperfections, lends both simplicity and elegance to the design. Iversen also employed similar methods to make objects such as bowls and candle holders: *Bronze Bowl* (1991) and *Candle House* (1992), both made from oxidized bronze. Though the lines of the shapes are more uniform in the utilitarian pieces (organic lines and curves in the bowl and sharp-edged, more architectural, geometric shapes in the candle holder), than in the bronze cuff, they all share an almost primitive quality that is accentuated by their exposed armatures. One can see through and around all of these pieces. Thus the infrastructure is exposed and lays bare the design.

It was intriguing to trace the evolution of Iversen's work. During the 1980s, Iversen made bulky necklaces and bracelets in the shape of weighty rock forms. *Pebble Pendants,* (1982), copper, enamel, and antique metal threads, had the dimensions and textures of real pebbles and gave the illusion of heaviness. Apart from the metal threads surrounding each stone, the pieces blended in so well with the real stones used in the display that it was hard to separate the two. Keeping his contacts with nature as a source into the nineties, Iversen exhibited grain shaped beads, linked into delicate *Grain Necklaces.* Using cast and oxidized sterling silver for his beads, Iversen made strands of sterling silver grains combined with red coral, pearls, and vermeil. These natural objects offered an interesting contrast between geological and biological forms. Iversen's highly skilled hand, in the manipulation of materials to re-create both the macro and microcosmic elements in nature, was more than evident.

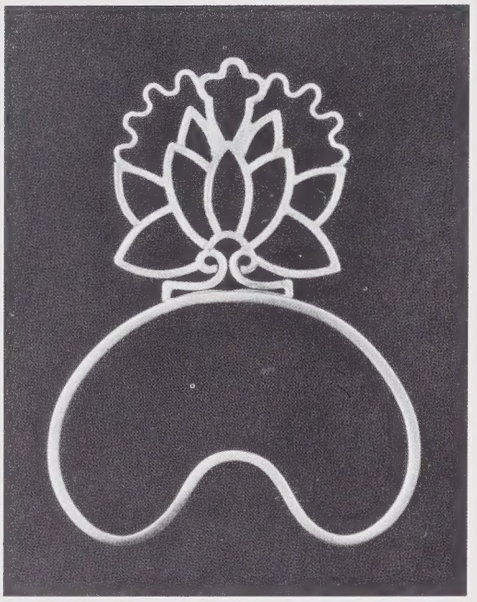
One could say that Iversen has a true-to-life attitude towards nature. His work maintains the timeless characteristics of nature as well as exhibiting its fragile vulnerabilities. *Leaf Pins,* of oxidized bronze and nickel silver, (1991), depict intricate life-like leaves at various points of erosion and decay. Viewing these different stages of metamorphosis, one senses the frailty of nature – as if they could transform these replicas of dried leaves into dust by clenching them into the palm of their hand.

The success of this exhibition was also assured by the manner in which it was presented. There were nine cases that held each type of work. Pieces of driftwood were used as pedestals for leaf pins; rocks were used in displaying pebble pendants; and necklaces were hung from plaster body fragments. From case to case, sensitive and thoughtful presentation helped viewers' focus on the continual flow of Iversen's ideas.

Lanie Lee is a writer and editor residing in New York City.



Untitled, 1991
Brooch, brass, 14k gold
12 x 7.7 x 1.1 cm



Untitled, 1991
Brooch, silver
6.5 x 5 x 0.25 cm

Photographs
by Guy Beaupré

Pamela Ritchie: Concatenation

Galerie Jocelyne Gobeil
Montréal, Québec, Canada
October 14 – November 21, 1992

by Jean-Claude Leblond

Canadian artist Pamela Ritchie's perspective on her work is as equally concerned with jewelry as with sculpture. "I do not consider myself a sculptor but rather more as a Jeweler even though this term is not very precise and tends to refer more to work produced in series. I would have to say that I am an artist creating jewelry." Head of the Jewelry Department at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Ritchie considers her work to have two statuses. "When they are not worn they appear as miniature sculpture. Contrarily, when placed upon the body they become jewelry. I firmly believe in the body's function of wearing this work and it is within this context that it takes on its full meaning and value."

Through their organic forms, her work refers to religious symbols and symbols of food such as the fish, a dominant theme in Christian cultures. Equally, however, her work subtly touches upon certain archetypes of the human psyche. "Because it is jewelry, my work has a strong relationship with the body, but because of the intimate nature of jewelry this work has an even stronger relationship with the mind."

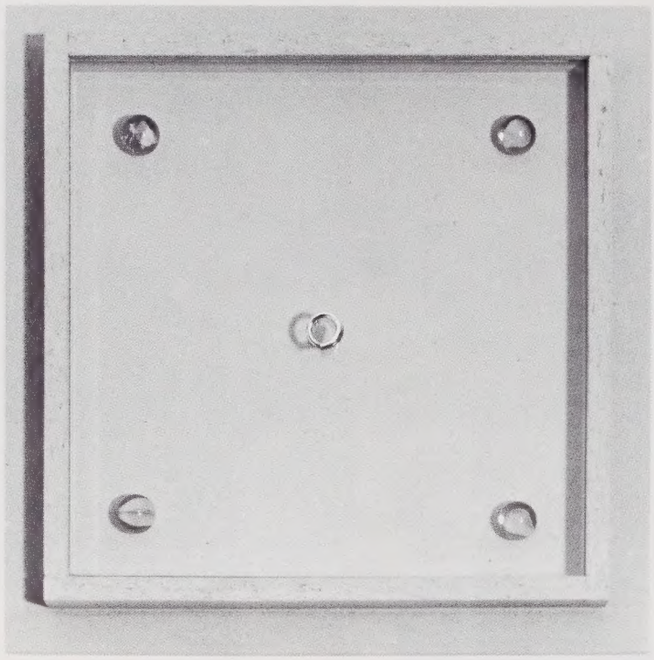
In her recent exhibition at Galerie Jocelyne Gobeil, Ritchie presented the results of her investigations over the past years. These strong works, delicately constructed in gold, silver, copper, and brass, are subtle expressions filled with internal meaning and discretion. We do not find in this work any desire to self proclaim. Her pieces are inhabited by the image of her personality and through them she conveys the contemporary need to re-connect with that dimension of existence that goes beyond our logical and rational comprehension. Her choice of warm metals appearing to have an almost porous quality, offers lively materials that also communicate within this sense. It is a sense not foreign to a form of piety. "These are works in relief from the body, that express the body and surpass the simple function of ornamentation", affirms Jocelyne Gobeil, whose gallery, one of the few in North America to specialize solely in contemporary art jewelry, presents the works of jewelry artists from all over the world.

One could almost say that, because of her attachment to great symbols and to the inherent contradictions of existence, Ritchie's jewelry is preoccupied with the metaphysical. As she says: "They represent a *modus vivendi* for dealing with the opposites of nourishment and deterioration, tolerance and fanaticism." Here, we are going beyond the simple decoration of clothing and entering directly into the realm of art, with its desire to pronounce its beliefs about the world, to participate in its beauty and also the dangers that threaten it. As well, at the heart of these magnificent organic forms, we detect a tear that longs to appear, a tear of sadness or joy, a tear that reconciles the contradictions. And as Charles Dickens wrote: "Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth."

Jean-Claude Leblond is a writer and critic who lives in Montréal, Québec, Canada.

THIS PAGE, RIGHT
Manfred Nisslmuller
Virgin-Ring, 1991
iron, gilding, wood, lacquer, glass
2 x 11⅛ x 11⅛″

THIS PAGE, FAR RIGHT
Falco Marx
Merkur, 1989
gold, mercury, water
¼ x 4¼ x ½″



Neoteric Jewelry

Snug Harbor Cultural Center
Staten Island, New York
September 21, 1992 – January 19, 1993

by Jan Baum

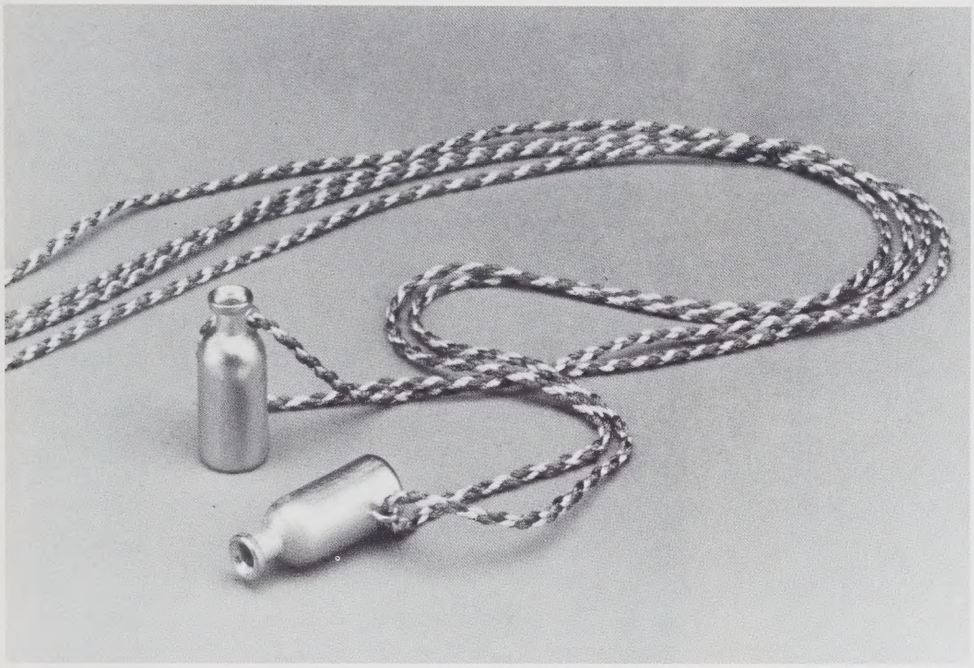
Neoteric Jewelry, curated by Louis Mueller and organized by the Snug Harbor Cultural Center, opened on September 21, 1991 at the latter's Staten Island location and remained there until January 19, 1992. The exhibition traveled to the Society of Contemporary Crafts in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (May 8, 1992 – August 16, 1992) and reached its final destination at the Museum of Art at the Rhode Island School of Design (September 10, 1992 – November 15, 1992).

The *Neoteric Jewelry* or "new jewelry" exhibition included the work of twenty-five international and national jewelers. Each participant was asked to create one new piece based on the theme of "virgin". Mueller's theme was defined as "something unexplored, fresh, concise and absolute". By assigning a subject, the curator's intent was to make the artists' definition of the object more clear; and to challenge the artists to "think outside of an accustomed way of thinking." Although the parameters were imposed, it was clearly not difficult to think "outside" of those parameters when dealing with such potent, socially and historically charged subject matter.

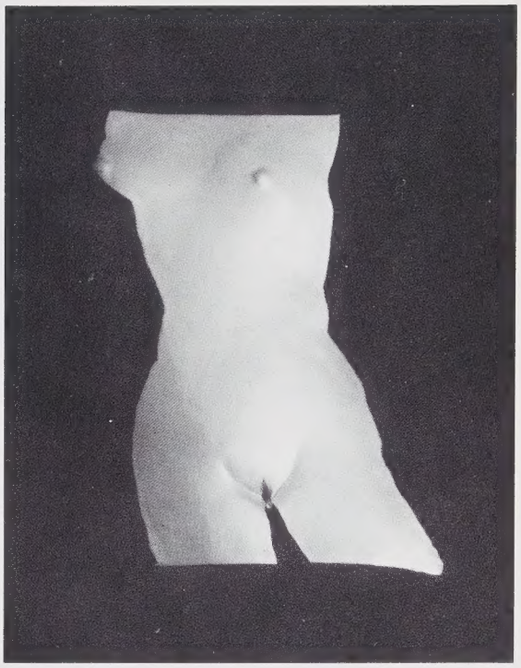
As one would expect, much of the work exhibited fell within the realm of accustomed responses. These ranged from literal interpretations suggesting moral connotations: Robin Quigley's *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,* Sandra Sherman's *Delilah I. Sketch,* and Warwick Freeman's *Soft Star;* to sexually connotative works: such as those found in Detlef Thomas' *Cockring,* Giampaolo Babetto's *Virgin #1,* with its ruby crotch, and Joyce Scott's more palatable, *Laying in Wait;* and finally to the more formal responses of Therese Hilbert, Daniel Kruger, Annette Ferdinandsen, and Johan van Aswegen. It was where the gaps between the poles of these customary responses were filled that one found the real meat of a show. When the gaps remained unfilled, comprehension was hindered, often times leaving viewers feeling disconnected.

Manfred Nisslmuller's scrupulousness was evident in *Virgin-Ring,* which was presented in a box lined with a stately red fabric. The artist coupled this elegant fabric with common marbles which suggested childhood. A small gold ring, which overlapped instead of forming a continuous band, floated in the center, untouchable and apparently waiting for the right owner, or the exact moment to be given away. This combination of elements hinted at the artist's interpretation of the theme (innocence and fragility), as well as echoing the text found in the catalog. The text reads, "A child will wear the ring. The glass will break, the balls will be lost, the red will fade away, the gold will disappear and the ends will meet. A woman will wear the ring."

Among the more intriguing entries were works by Leslie Quint and Falko Marx. In Quint's neckpiece two shapes, a dark, solid knife-like form and a delicate, sterling, feather-like shell, dangle from steel cables;. Both are attached to a third, slightly thicker, steel cable meant to be worn around the neck and on which the other forms rotate. The metaphorical qualities of natural shapes, suggested by Quint, address a harmony of forms. While independent these two objects complement one another.



Robin Quigley
The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, 1991
18k gold, double silk cord, 1 x ¾", 28" cord



Giampaolo Babetto
Virgin # 1, 1991
18k gold, ruby, 3¼ x 3¼ x ¼"

Merkur, a brooch by Falko Marx, entices viewers with liquid mercury captured within a gold container. Marx's choice of material is a provocative one. The sensuality and the stillness of the mercury tease the viewer. It seemed appropriate, in the context of the exhibition, that the viewer was denied access to the brooch and therefore could not further disturb and explore the work. Yet, even if worn, the mercury in the golden vial will always remain protected and unadulterated.

The works of some artists in the exhibition make allusions to nature. Barbara Seidenath's enameled earrings resemble pods. This impression is reinforced by the small coral "seeds" that poke out from the bottom when the pieces are handled. The white enameled exterior provides a housing for the orange coral seeds that reside in the interior and the organic nature of this form is suggestive of the feminine. Bernhard Schobinger's quartz ring presents the "unspoiled purity" that is often found in nature. The circular break which allows the quartz to be worn is "a perfect work of Nature", while the precise planes of the outer part of the ring have been created by the artist.

A major drawback to this exhibition was the lack of clarity and connection between the pieces as a whole and the absence of certain works' clear relation to the theme. If a viewer had entered one of the three exhibition spaces without reading the introductory placard, the exhibition may well have appeared to be merely a show of contemporary jewelry. Even the informed viewer had rigorous work to do. The works which appeared to be largely formal or abstract left the viewer to speculate about the connection of the pieces to the theme. Was the artist working in a manner which was unfamiliar to them? Was the artist responding to an idea that they had not previously considered?

Although a breach between objects and theme often occurred, the accompanying catalog was, and still remains, a very helpful guide to deciphering the show. It clarifies Mueller's intentions and, in many cases, supplies texts which augment individual pieces. Mueller's purposes and contributions went beyond the theme already addressed. He also intended the exhibition to introduce international jewelers' works to American viewers (a credible maneuver which may enrich our sometimes "national" palate.)

This was the first show that Mueller curated so he too, somewhat ironically, was a part of his theme. In addition to the two rooms which housed the exhibition at the Museum of Art at RISD, a third room displayed a number of the curator's own works from the late 1960s, 1988, and 1991. It was unclear, however, what connection, if any, this group of work had to *Neoteric Jewelry* other than exemplifying the curator's personal work.

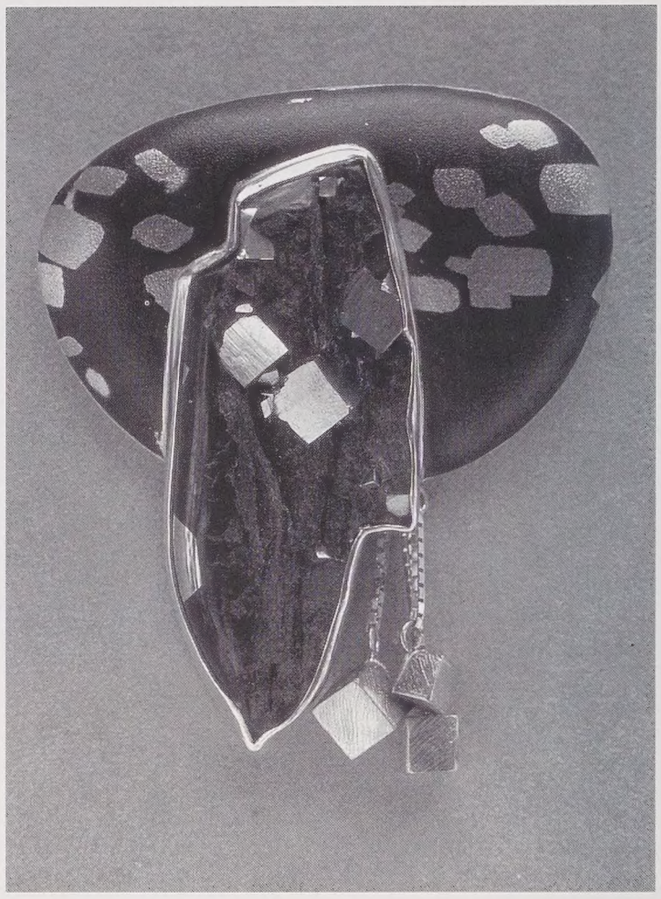
It is apparent that some of the confusion viewers may have experienced was the result of Mueller's multiple intentions. While I endorse this method of structuring an exhibition, some questions still remain. Was the exhibition primarily meant to be about the theme? Was the intention in assigning a theme to gain a deeper understanding of the subject? Finally does the viewer come away from *Neoteric Jewelry* with new perceptions regarding the term "virgin"?

Jan Baum is a metalsmith who lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

RIGHT
Barbara's Ring, 1992
14k, 18k, 22k golds,
hollow formed "touch" stones,
shakudo, lightening ridge opal
1 x 1 x 1″

FAR RIGHT
Cubic 3 Brooch, 1992
shakudo, 14k, 18k, 22k, golds,
pyrite in schist, 2½ x 2 x 2″

Photographs by P. Kahn



EARTHSPEAK: *Carrie Adell*

Running Ridge Gallery
Santa Fe, New Mexico
Winter 1992

by Ellen Berkovitch

Carrie Adell's pronounced interest in letting the earth speak is the leitmotif of her recent work, and this approach provides a clear voice for unifying materials and designs. The jeweler calls the work "right brain" jewelry, and this new work serves as a contrast to her previous "hyperbolic parabola" series of clean, three-dimensional metal links with interlocked vectors, in which movement flowed naturally from geometry and which represented an intellectual challenge, overcome. The work recently displayed appeared on first glance to break little new ground, but on closer inspection these newer works revealed powerful tactile and visual strengths: the feel of the polished pebble shapes in the wearer's hand and on the wearer's body; the cohesion of the pattern in the gemstones with the pattern the jeweler creates in the matched metal; and the burnished and sedimentary colors that capture as closely as possible their original rock strata influences.

This is jewelry whose strength comes from its emotional impact over time. It invites close, wearer interaction with both its forms and meanings. The jeweler even names the parts of the assembled pieces after the natural forms that inspired them – the metal sheet is the "fabric" of the rock; the oval shapes that repeat through the collection are "pebbles" which, at craft shows, she displays loose along with finished pieces. The process of picking up pebbles, Adell says, re-invokes an instinctual neural pathway that is childlike, therefore intuitive and natural. The collection itself coheres through the repetition of the pebble shape, and the group of works are reminiscent in their idiom of Helen Frankenthaler canvases which carried forward experiments with poured color across a subtle continuum.

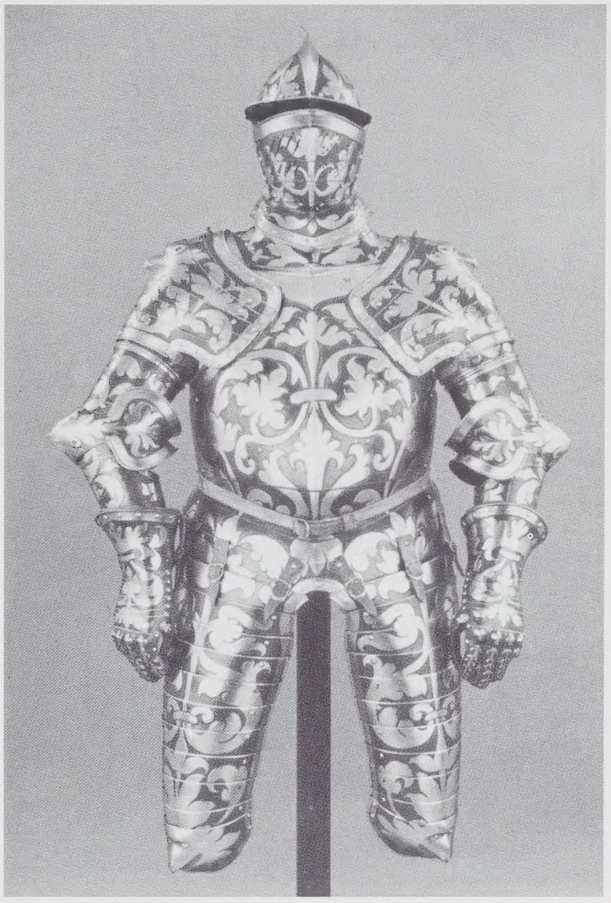
Revealing the artist's interests in patina, broken faced pairs, and evoked emotional content, every piece in the collection begins with the "fabric" – that is: a worked metal sheet that may mix sterling, gold, and nickel, or the fabric may be assembled entirely of scrap to create a particular coloration and design matrix. Adell then engraves the metal surface and mimics the natural imprints of the attendant gemstones, or the engraved markings may reflect the ceremonial writing of her own haiku, or sometimes merely an emotive state, such as the "seismic" black pebble brooches and bracelet clasps that were etched with gold shock-waves to dispel the artist's anxiety about aftershocks of the last San Francisco earthquake.

The gemstones Adell chooses have a natural luminosity and contrasting occlusions, and the artist displays evident preferences for boulder opal, schist, and other hard quartzes that "fight back". While the stones themselves create certain mandates for a finished piece, the metalsmith says she doesn't consider herself to be "an environmentalist for gemstones." Rather, her interest, as expressed through this recent collection, was to let the gemstones create an environment of earthly awareness and history that becomes the tie that binds disparate pieces together.

One is reminded of a 1950s science fiction movie in which "hypnoglyphs", (rock creatures) hypnotized, and then persuaded able-bodied men to enter an alien spaceship in order to enrich the gene pool of the alien culture. It is the power of the rocks themselves that is the deceptively simple focus of Adell's new work.

Ellen Berkovitch writes about jewelry and the arts from Santa Fe, NM.

Michel Witz the Younger, Austrian
Black and White ¾ Armor for a Nobleman, c. 1550
iron and leather
Joanneum Graz, Landeszeughaus
Photograph by Richard Margolis



Imperial Austria: Treasures of Art, Arms & Armor from the State of Styria

Smithsonian Institution, International Gallery
Washington, D.C.
October 3, 1992 – January 24, 1993

by J. Susan Isaacs

The most important collection of arms and armor in the Western world was on display at the International Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution through January 24, 1993, and continues at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, March 14 – June 27, 1993. The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Prestel-Verlag, Munich. For the first time outside of Europe, a major collection of armor from the Landeszeughaus in Graz, Styria, the oldest and largest historic armory in the world, is presented. Included in the exhibition are more than 250 works of late-Medieval, Renaissance, and Baroque art, arms, and armor, which reveal a stunning technical and aesthetic achievement spanning a period of three centuries. Clearly, Austrian armament was not merely functional; the quality of design and craftsmanship paralleled the fine arts and even led to the creation of a new medium: intaglio printmaking. All of these works were produced for the fighting men of Styria, a borderland defense region controlled by the Habsburg.

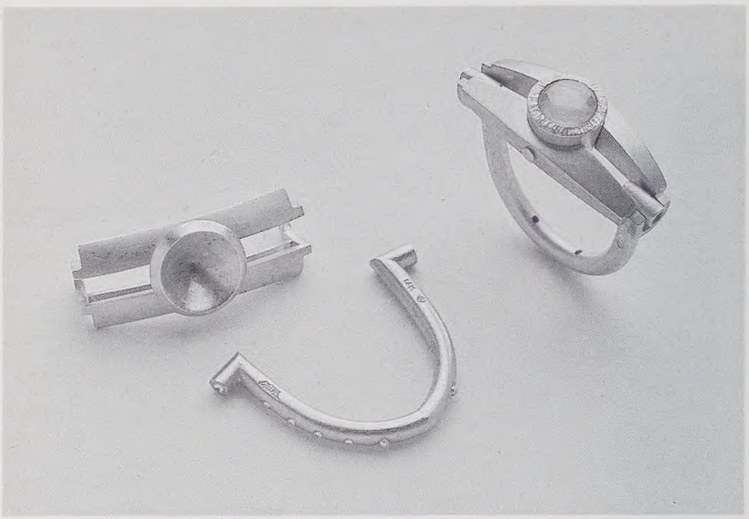
Because of aggression from the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century, arms and armor became increasingly important to the defense of Styria, which had no natural geographic borders. Graz, the capital city of Styria, had three armories to store the vast collections of the resident armies and the reigning prince. Of these, the largest, Landeszeughaus, was primarily responsible for the fortification of the province of Styria, including cities and border strongholds. Its arsenal, amassed over three centuries, remains intact, and the 250 items in this exhibition were chosen as representative samples of the arms and armor used to assist in the protection of the Habsburg Empire from the time of the first Ottoman invasion in the fifteenth century up to the eventual defeat of the Ottoman army in 1683.

Previous to this era, mail (interlocking rings of metal) was the predominant form of body protection in battle; however, by the fifteenth century, because of the need for protection from a relatively new threat – firearms, armor had evolved from mail to plate. Unlike mail, plate is a natural medium for decoration and artistic expression. Until the industrial revolution, armor and arms were, for the most part, one-of-a-kind, uniquely crafted works of art, in addition to being highly useful objects in war and defense. Originally, heraldic devices were placed on the armor so that the identity of the concealed warrior would be known. Ultimately, these designs evolved into highly ornate and extremely decorative compositions.

One of the most striking pieces in the exhibition was made by the master armorer Michel Witz the Younger, around 1550. This ¾ suit of armor has an embossed black and white finish in a stylized leaf pattern. This pattern was created by darkening some areas and polishing others to a smooth gleam. The ¾ suit is an extraordinarily elegant work and epitomizes the beauty of the Landeszeughaus collection. Patterns were also applied, using a variety of techniques, to the surfaces of daggers, swords, lances, handguns, and rifles, as well as suits of armor. Of particular interest to metalsmiths is the wide variety of examples of etching, painting, oxidation, gilding, repoussé, and inlay, which are included in this exhibition. Surely, anyone interested in the history of metalcrafts and metallurgy will find this exhibition challenging, informative and fascinating.

J. Susan Isaacs is an art historian and critic from Wilmington, Delaware

Nina Ehmck
Pendant, 1992
18k gold, oxidized silver



Cary Stefáni
Rings, 1992
14k white and 18k yellow golds,
crystallized bronze, pink tourmeline

METAMORPHOSIS
Convertible Jewelry

Atrium Gallery
New York, New York
December 18, 1992 – January 7, 1993

by Gail Brown

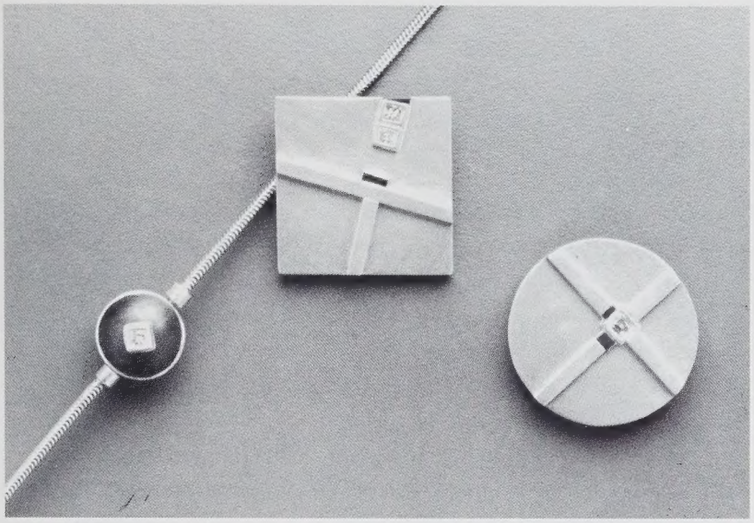
Helping to engage the wearer in making personal choices in the presentation of ornament may be a step towards enlarging the audience for contemporary art jewelry. *METAMORPHOSIS / Convertible Jewelry,* presented by Atrium Gallery, New York, addressed this concept of active choice by focusing on the dialogue between gallery owners and their clients. The 44 artists invited to participate were challenged to create jewelry which is wearable in multiple ways. Most of the resultant work was high carat gold and precious stone items, de rigueur for a Fifth Avenue clientele, and along with investment-size prices came traditional, sound workmanship and often non-challenging design. Yet for an audience looking for both quality and innovative solutions to convertibility the exhibition did not disappoint. The breadth of the show was commendable and there were a smaller group of artists who addressed the potential of convertible, sculptural jewelry in particularly unique ways. For some, this exploration is a natural consequence of their usual design and engineering pursuits. There was also a wealth of well crafted, classically referenced pieces which addressed predictable solutions to interactive jewelry: pendants which became brooches and vice versa; necklaces which became bracelets and shorter necklaces; brooches whose smaller elements are stick pins, etceteras.

Nancy Michel's 2″ dangle earrings of softly folded 14k and 18k gold sheet with delicately striated surfaces presented the wearer with four choices. Each element was individually significant in scale and concept: a ¾″ closed form sits in the earlobe, a curled, 1″ leaf-like pendant can be attached, thus creating what appeared to be one compound element. Though both forms can be worn alone successfully, more adventurous wearers could opt for an asymmetric pairing. The strength of this work was the integration of the design with the sureness of each function. These pieces beckoned to be handled.

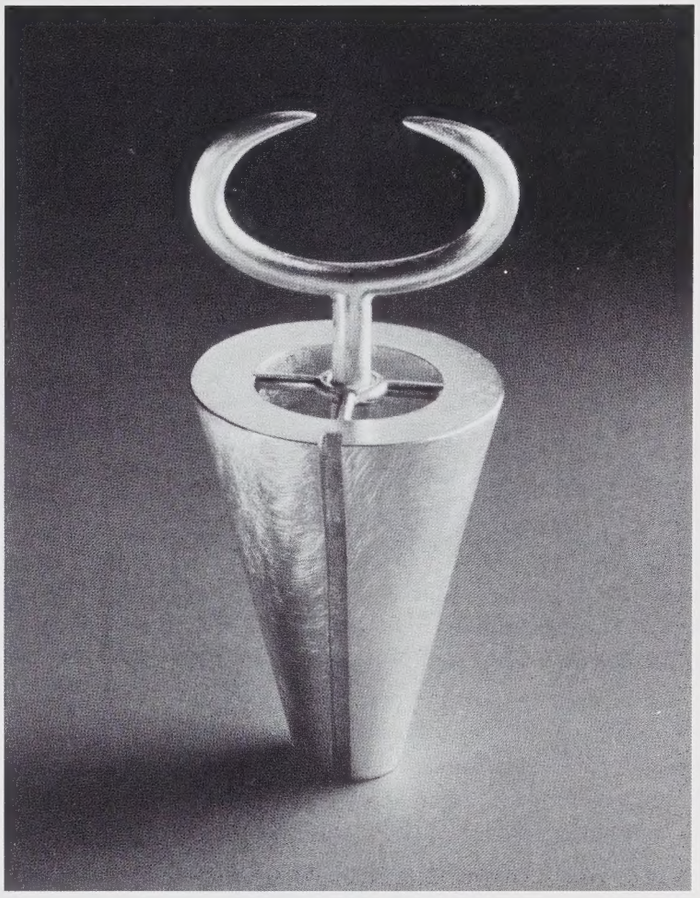
Alexandra Watkins exhibited a reversible 15″ necklace composed of 14 unique, lozenge shaped hollow forms. Connected by delicate rings, the forms ranged from rectilinear to ovoid, varying in size from ⅝″ to 1¼″ in length and with a depth to ¼″. There was a sense of an organic landscape in the richly textured repoussé surfaces. The oxidized sterling side with 22k accents presented an introspective territory of irregular patterning and strong contrasts. The 14k and 18k side brought the landscape into the light with rich and subtle variation.

On a 24″ oxidized silver, herringbone chain, Nina Ehmck hung a multi-pendant. Three sculptural, 18k and oxidized silver bleeding heart forms drooped delicately on narrow stalks, suspended from a curved yoke. Closer examination revealed the center 2″ pod to be an independent form, which hung from a straight shaft and could be worn singly. The two side buds were 1¼″ earrings whose stems were connected to the yoke by their small diamond studs. The gentle movement of the components and the contrast of the materials and textures echoed the fragile essence of this flower; both the concept and execution reflected a successful parity of ideas and elements.

Cary Stefáni created a mixed pair of convertible rings in which horseshoe-like shanks and arched upper sections could be interchanged. The components available separately, were 14k white and 18k yellow gold shanks. They could be slid up and locked into place between the top sections: a crystallized bronze concave disc resting on 18k bars and/or a round pink tourmaline encased in a wide yellow gold bezel, sitting on white gold bars. There was real intimacy at work in these pieces: the wearer builds the delicate rings and chooses to display them singly or in stacks. This concept offers variety and unpredictability in addition to the fineness of the elements.



Rena Koopman
Metamorphosis #2, 1992
18K yellow and green golds,
22K yellow gold, shakudo
Photograph by Dean Powell



LEFT
Didi Suydam
Pendant, 1992
sterling silver, 23K gold leaf
3½ x 1¼ x 1¼″

Rena Koopman offered recognizable elements from her visual vocabulary. With excellent problem solving skills she carried the assignment to a most effective resolution. In *Metamorphosis #1,* she presented what at first seemed to be a 2½″ square brooch of 18k and 22k, gold with contrasting, inlaid shakudo. Four wavy squares clustered toward the center, were accented by rhythmically placed rods. However, this piece was, in fact, two rectangular brooches, each 1¼″ x 2½″. But, it could also be four earrings, each 1 x 1″. Upon examination of the reverse side, one could find the delicate workings which held the two snap-out earring elements in place, within each rectangle. The well engineered design is an aesthetic winner: form and function mutually supportive with economy. In *Metamorphosis #2,* interchangeability was anticipated: an 18″ herringbone neck chain has as its center a ½″ shakudo bead, accented by a diamond housed in a square bezel which is, in fact, the clasp. When unscrewed, one or two of the convertible elements can be added: a ⅞″ square or a 1″ diameter disc of 18k and 22k yellow, and 18k green gold. The surfaces, divided by raised rods and arranged asymmetrically, led the eye to the boxed diamond and shakudo accents. These components had a dual nature: they were also a pair of "button" earrings, whose post backs pivot on a small swivel. Koopman integrated her interest in how things fit together, physically and conceptually, with the utmost concern for wearability.

Didi Suydam addressed the challenge of convertibility in another direction. She has traditionally shown an interest in pendants as objects, concentrating on form unencumbered by jewelry fittings. These forms are intended to stand alone, to be powerful symbols when not on the body. They only reveal their wearability upon close and careful examination. *Pendant,* 1992, a 3½ x 1¼ x 1¼″ brushed sterling silver and 23k gold leaf cylinder is topped by an upturned handle. When pulled a long, delicate loop-into-loop chain appears, revealing the connection of the vessel form to the head hole and then to a horn like extremity. The piece is meant to be worn front to back, accenting the body with both a fragile line and two medallion forms. Suydam integrates the power of the object with the personal ritual of wearing jewelry.

Poised on a hollow, burnished brass stand, a wing like rolled silver form by Yoshiko Yamamoto appeared precarious and rather like a double windsock, almost joining at the wide ends. Each burnished cone is 3″ in length, and the total work at 8¾″ made a vital image. When the object is removed from its stand a large pendant which can be threaded through a 24″ thin steel cable is revealed. It can either be strung through the undulating wire between the cones, or threaded through the tube like ends; its dramatic gesture varying and dependent on which mood and placement the wearer chooses. Yamamoto also enticed one to choose with an oxidized bracelet of copper sheet, designed, cut, and formed. It is a series of triangles made from a large triangle whose center is a 3⅜″ triangular armhole. From one direction its "arms" curl away, flowing and tubular. On the reverse, the focus is on the hole accented by 1¼″ walls which frame the arm and emphasize the forward curled leaves. Even with an object of such simplicity, the wearer is still offered the chance to make a selection.

In such a large exhibition there are many innovative pieces. When a majority of audiences still desire affirmation of their conservative jewelry decisions, a broad presentation, such as this one, serves as an educational tool. By inviting the viewer/wearer to examine closely, to handle, to manipulate the objects, and to make aesthetic choices, (even small ones) it is hoped that a new level of positive response to change and the "unexpected" can be achieved. *METAMORPHOSIS* was a truly challenging show and it invited creativity on many levels.

Gail Brown lives in Philadelphia and writes on jewelry and fine crafts.

Letters

Dear Editor:

I am writing in response to Susan Kingsley's letter to the Editor in the Fall 1992 issue of *Metalsmith*. I am puzzled by her anger and at first wondered if she had read the same article "Profit by Design: A Profile of the Niessing Company" (Spring 1992) that I had. So I reread the article and reread her letter and decided I had to write.

To start with, I find it surprising that someone who is concerned that a company is "promoting and reinforcing cultural stereotypes about women as objects for male consumption" would refer to the authors as "Mr. and Mrs. Friedlich" when the byline to the article clearly identifies them as Donald Friedlich and Judith Mitchell. As a married woman who has retained her own last name I find this insulting and disturbing.

The article seemed to me to be very much about goldsmithing, jewelry, design, and artists working in industry. As for the naive concern that technical information was lacking, I cannot imagine that the Niessing Company would want tension rings and "Iris" gold fusing to become the next techno-fad of American metalsmithing as other techniques have been in the past.

Ms. Kingsley's remarks about profit making remind me of my art school days, where how to make a living once out of school was not a subject to be discussed. Perhaps Ms. Kingsley is in a situation where she doesn't need to make money. If so, she is most fortunate. Many of us are attempting to make a living doing what we love to do. In my case, making jewelry. I think that information about how people make a profit and find a market for their work is relevant to this magazine and that working in industry, the evolution of a jewelry company, production work, making one of the kind pieces, etc., are all valid subjects.

As to the complaint that "Jewelry cannot gain public acceptance as art." I have grown up looking at jewelry in art museum collections, along with all the other decorative and fine arts. What kind of affirmation or canonization is Ms. Kingsley seeking? When I look at the "Artworld" an awful lot of it looks like a place I don't want to be. It seems more about money, investment, and elitism than about ideas or art. I cannot speak for others, but I am more concerned that the jewelry I make is worn and adds something to the lives of the people who wear it. That is more important to me than whether someone calls it art. I would like to know if others are as sick and tired of this "Is it Art?" "When will it be Art?" harping as I am.

Finally, I do have to say that I am not thrilled by the images used by advertising. However the problem is not endemic to jewelry. Cultural stereotyping, sex, and the promise of "the good life" (whatever that is) are used to sell just about everything in our culture and the problem is with advertising not jewelry.

Catherine Butler, Cleveland, Ohio

Dear Editor:

It has taken a long time to get my thoughts pulled together into some coherent context before writing on Ettagale Blauer's book, *Contemporary American Jewelry Design*," and the subsequent review by Mark Baldridge in the Summer 1992 issue of *Metalsmith* magazine. I have the borrowed book before me now, because I feel forced (I do not use the word lightly) to investigate its pages further if I am to comment upon it and its subsequent review.

At this point in time when the work of serious American jewelry artists is finally being recognized, Blauer's thinking, and gathering of work throws us, with one heavily laden stone, back to the metaphoric middle ages. She acknowledges that the majority of work in her book is that of craftsmen who make their living through their work at craft fairs and her fascination in them (craft fairs). However, she implies over and over again, that these are the important jewelers in contemporary America. She also states the book is about noble materials, mentioning in the sketchiest of ways that there are people working in other materials thereby dismissing them and leaving out the most important body of American work, work which has been acclaimed worldwide. There are a handful of names in her book that probably should not be there because their work is dramatically superior to the low level (I do not refer to craftsmanship) of the others. She does not seem able to distinguish between the two levels. (There are some truly some grotesque works in her book, some of which are illustrated full page.) In fairness, the people, and their works, we should hold in esteem are Ebendorf, Fisch, Friedlich, Hu, Loloma, Papp, Pardon, and Saunders.

Although I am loath to say anything good about this book, in good conscience I must. Blauer is articulate and writes extremely well. Her historical facts, although not altogether accurate, are quite good, even excellent, unfortunately her facility gives credence to the rest of the book and this is disastrous. That is the end of any praise that can be attributed to her concept of a book on contemporary jewelry, it is in fact an ignoble book about noble materials.

Mark Baldridge's review, which praises such a book, in such an important vehicle as *Metalsmith*, is sad commentary. Although Mark expresses his reservations and provides astute criticism of the discrepancies in Blauer's text, I believe Baldridge genuinely likes this book (I was touched by the joy with which he sometimes expressed himself). The serious, and unfortunate, aspect of this is that Baldridge gives credence to this type of work more solidly through the agency of Blauer. It is a proof that Blauer degrades us all in her praise of this work.

The difficulty and tragedy is that Blauer states her case with extreme facileness; it is a seductive text, and she seduces us at every corner. The general public, jewelers who are starting out, good craftsmen who have not found their way, and, most unhappily, collectors, will be drawn to this book.

Blauer could have been a mover during that long period of history in which humankind was convinced that the world was flat; and yes, it is so, that there are people who believe this still. Worse, she may not only lead others in the wrong direction, she may convince others that her narrow vision of the world is all that there is. At the very least, she provides a path of innumerable giant steppingstones backwards.

Thomas Gentille, New York City

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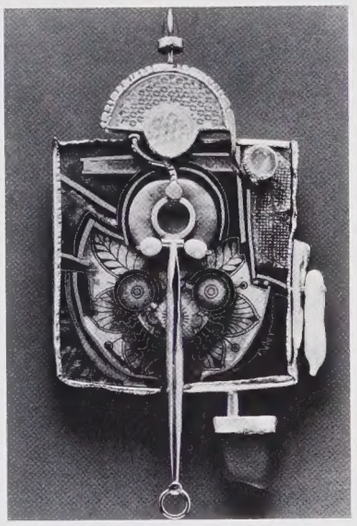

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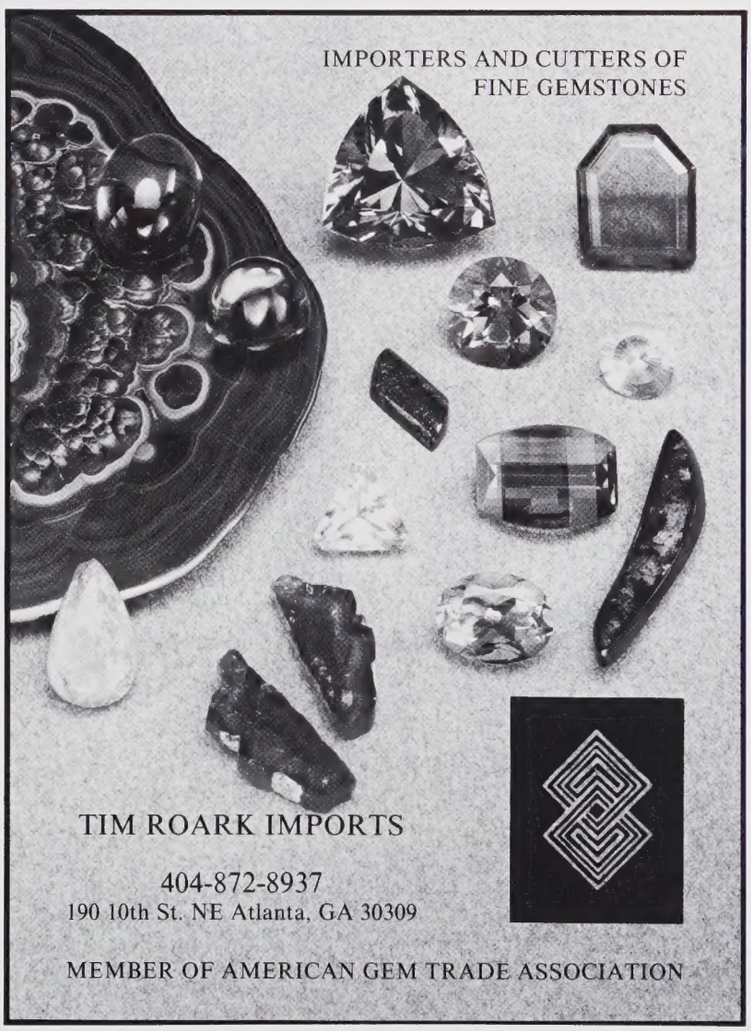

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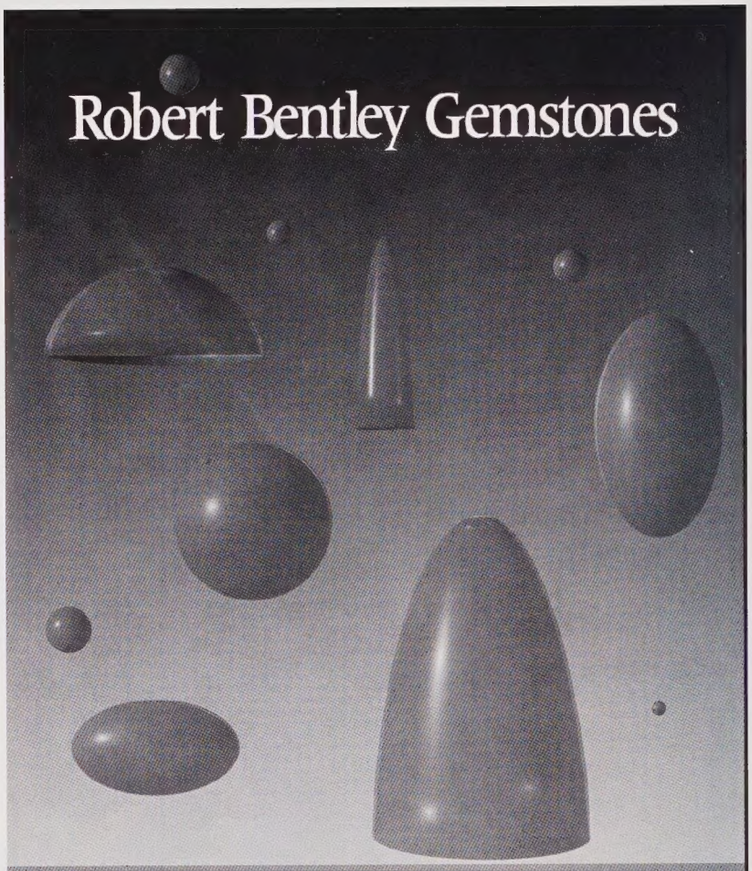

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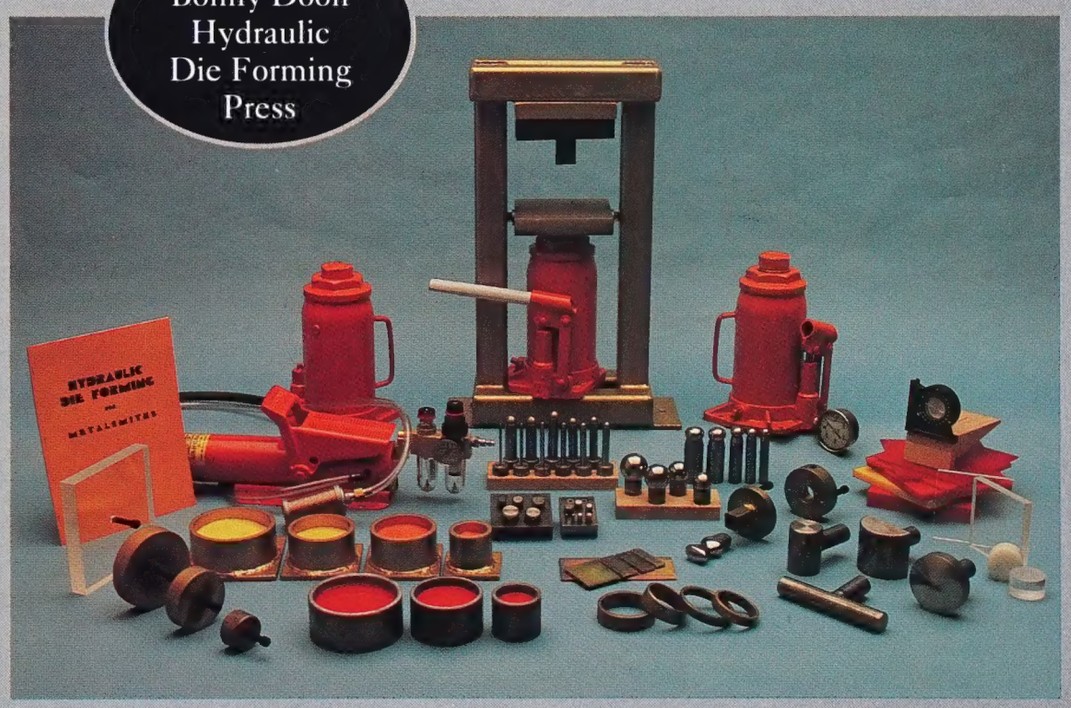

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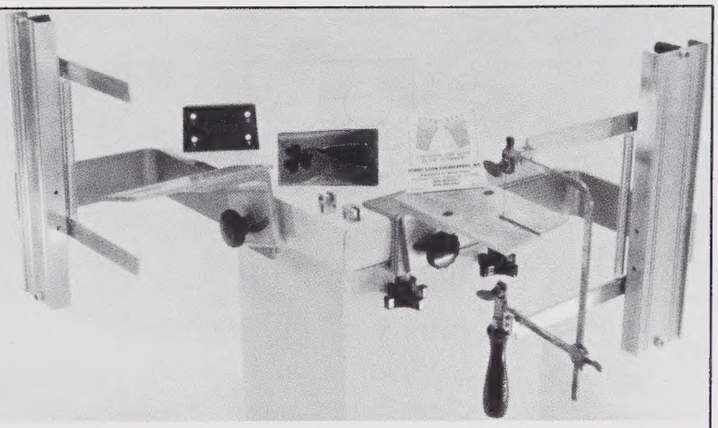

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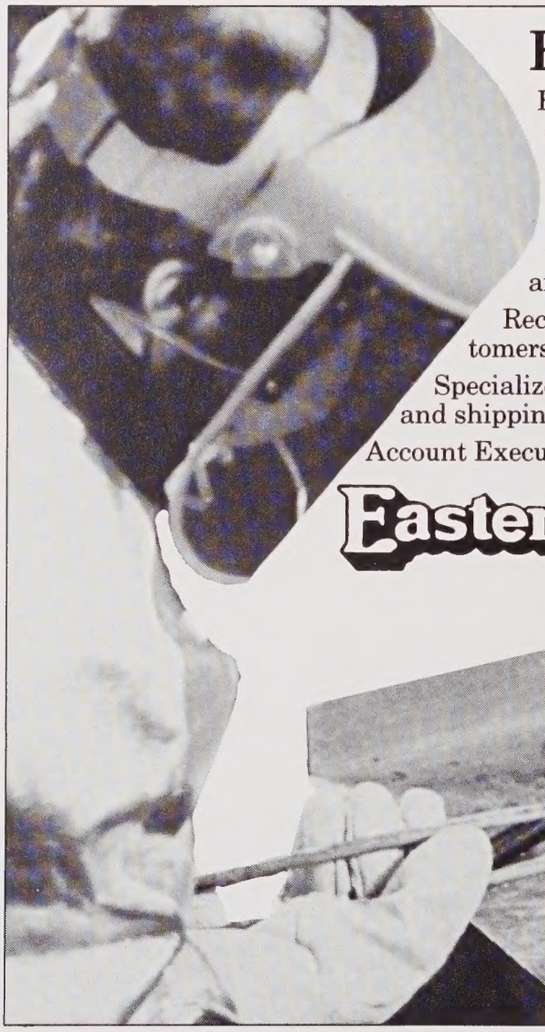

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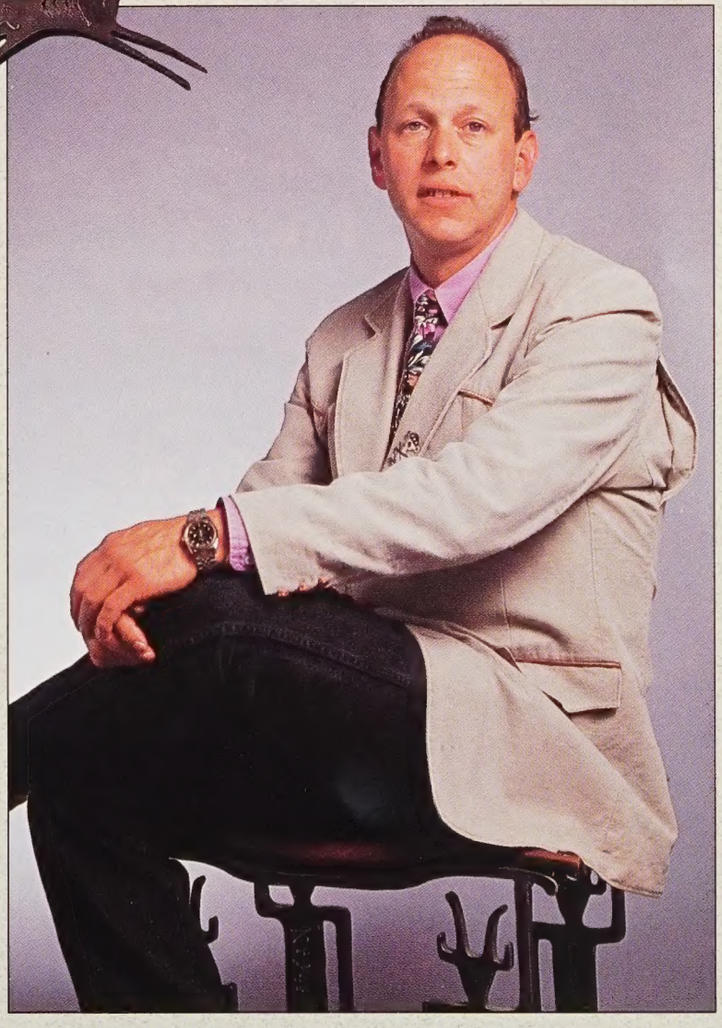

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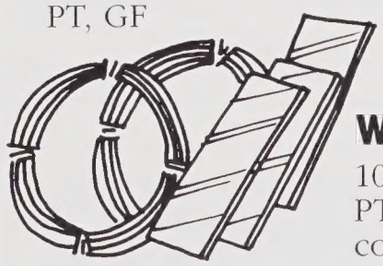

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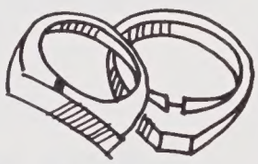

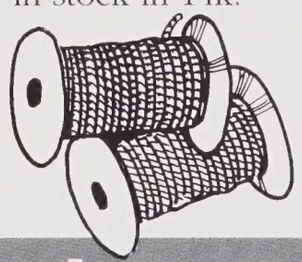

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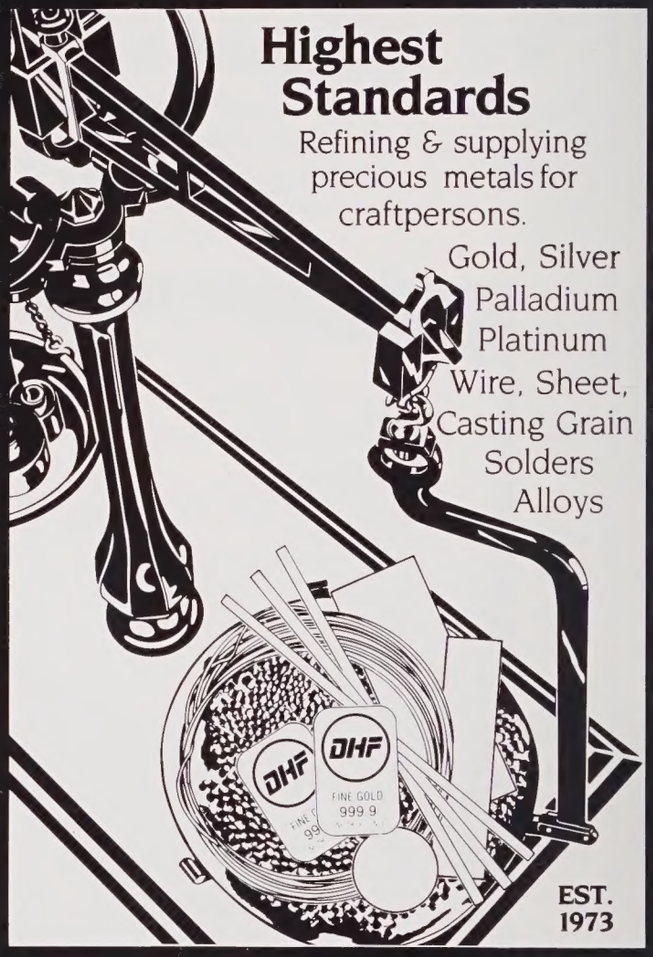

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Annual National Conference

IN HONOR OF 1993 AS "THE YEAR OF AMERICAN CRAFT" AND THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SNAG, THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE, "CELEBRATING A NEW METALS ORDER," PAYS HOMAGE TO THE PAST AND PRESENT, BUT ESPECIALLY ANTICIPATES AND EXAMINES THE FUTURE OF CONTEMPORARY METALWORK IN AN INCREASINGLY SMALLER AND EVER-CHANGING WORLD.

Celebrating a New Metals Order

Dates: *July 14–17, 1993* (Wednesday evening–Saturday night).

Location: *Omni Netherland Hotel*, centrally located in downtown Cincinnati, an elegant, renovated Art Deco hotel (founded in 1931) with numerous amenities, including a health spa and swimming pool. Keep cool traversing the heart of the city through the network of enclosed skywalks.

Keynote Speakers include: *William Harper,* Tallahassee, Florida; *Wilhelm Mattar,* Cologne, Germany; *Jocelyne Gobeil,* Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Alberto Alessi,* Crusinallo, Italy.

Panel Discussion on "Future Educational Issues" with: Professors *Christina DePaul,* Moderator, Univ. of Akron; *Stanley Lechtzin,* Tyler School of Art, Temple Univ.; *Leslie Leupp,* Penn State Univ,; *Myra Mimlitsch-Gray,* Purdue Univ.

Other Lectures: *Paulette Werger,* Madison, Wisconsin; *Kathleen Brown,* Kent, Ohio; *Harriete Estel Berman,* San Mateo, California; and Others.

Open Forum with *Frank Lewis,* Editor of *Metalsmith Magazine* and the *Metalsmith* Editorial Advisory Board.

National Student Juried Slide Presentation; SNAG Scholarship Award.

Special exhibitions: *American Metals* national curated touring exhibition organized by the Fort Wayne Museum of Art premier showing at Cincinnati's noted Contemporary Arts Center, and *Ohio Metals: A Legacy* curated by Ullysses Dietz at the Miami University Art Museum.

Vendors' Room featuring gemstone, tool, equipment and metal suppliers; also, presenting the SNAG Book Department.

Special Events include opening evening Riverboat Dinner Cruise with Pin Swap, Exhibition Receptions, Vendors' Reception; Student Mixer; Silent Auction of member donated artworks and special tools; Anniversary Beaux Arts Ball and Banquet (black tie optional, body ornament or mask requested).

1993 SNAG/Cincinnati Commemorative 2-Color Ash Gray 100% Cotton T-Shirt ($14.00) and Black Shop Apron ($18.00) may be ordered with registration.

Conference Fee: $185 for Members; $200 for Non-Members; $125 for Full-time Students with ID. Conference fees must be paid no later than June 10 and covers all conference events. After June 10, a late fee of $25.00 per attendee will be charged. A cancellation fee of $25.00 per attendee will be charged prior to June 10 and $50.00 per attendee after June 10. Tickets for special events may be purchased for Guests. Those who subscribe to *Metalsmith Magazine* only must pay the non-members fee.

Hotel Room Rates: $82.00 for single occupancy per night; $99.00 for double occupancy with a $15.00 charge for each additional person per night. City hotel tax is an additional 10%. Hotel Reservations must be made by June 10 and secured with a deposit of credit card. After this date, room reservations are accepted on a space- and rate-available basis.

All members of the Society of North American Goldsmiths will receive a registration brochure shortly. Others may request the brochure by writing SNAG '93. PO Box 404, Oxford, Ohio 45056.

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Metalsmith offers its readers insight into the complexities of marketing through galleries and stores.

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Membership

The Society of North American Goldsmiths

The Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG) was formed in 1970 to promote contemporary metalwork and jewelry. Through its publications, services and advocacy, SNAG serves the fine art and jewelry communities. SNAG's publications and conferences provide technical information and critical insight to practitioners and teachers of metalwork. Professional metalsmiths, students, collectors, gallery owners and enthusiasts make up the dynamic mix of the Society.

Services

The Society's annual conference provides a forum for the exchange of many points of view. Speakers of national recognition offer stimulating discourse on a range of topics. Members of the Society attend the conference at reduced rates.

The Society sponsors important exhibitions of contemporary metalwork. Past SNAG shows have been mounted at the Renwick Gallery, the St. Paul Museum of Art and several galleries in New York City. These exhibitions are usually restricted to members only.

The Society maintains an audio-visual library, which contains the portfolios of distinguished members and other notable metalsmiths. Members can rent slides, films and videotapes at a nominal cost.

The Society operates a discount book service, through which important texts on all aspects of the field can be ordered at a reduced price.

Publications

Metalsmith is the only magazine in America devoted solely to the metal arts. Please see the reverse side of this page for a detailed description of this exciting magazine. Membership in the Society includes a subscription to *Metalsmith*.

The *SNAG Newsletter* is published bimonthly and is available to members only. It features timely information on exhibitions, work-shops, conferences and job opportunities throughout North America.

Membership Categories

The Society offers several types of memberships, each tailored to a specific level of involvement in the field of contemporary metalsmithing.

- *General Membership* ($45) is open to everyone and includes subscriptions to *Metalsmith* and the *SNAG Newsletter*, reduced conference fees, access to all of SNAG's services and full voting privileges.
- *Student Membership* ($35) is offered at a reduced rate to any full-time student attending an accredited educational institution. This membership offers all the advantages of a *general membership* but does not carry voting privileges. Please send a copy of your student ID with membership application.
- *Institutional Membership* ($45) is available for nonprofit organizations such as schools and libraries. Institutions receive *Metalsmith* magazine and the *SNAG Newsletter*.

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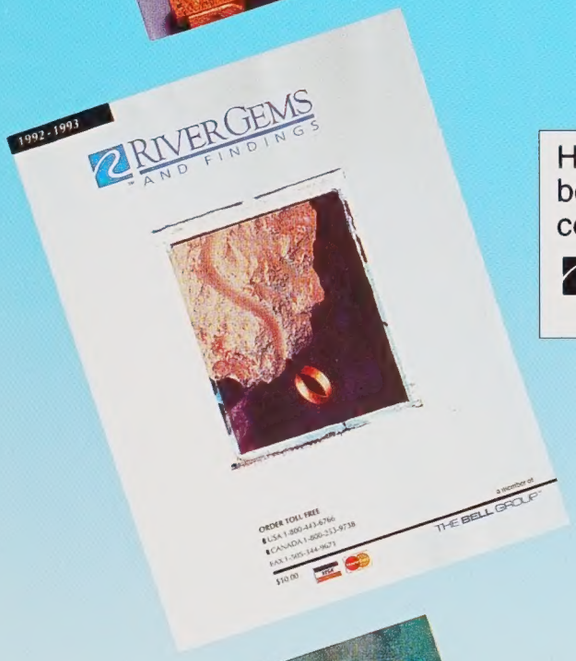

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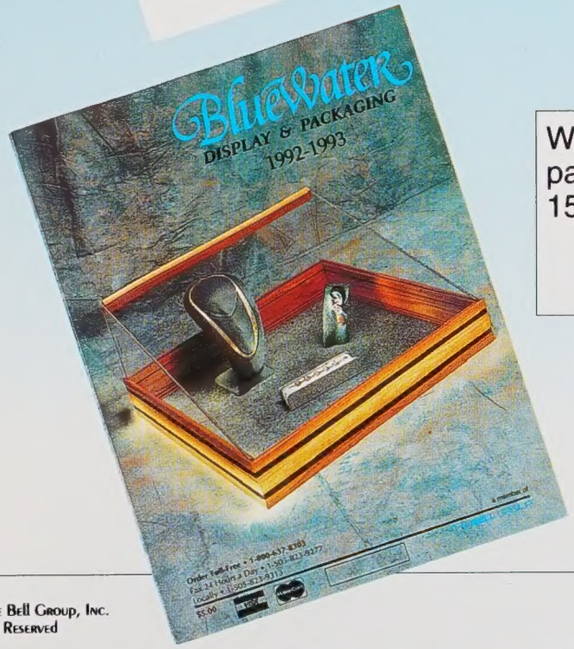

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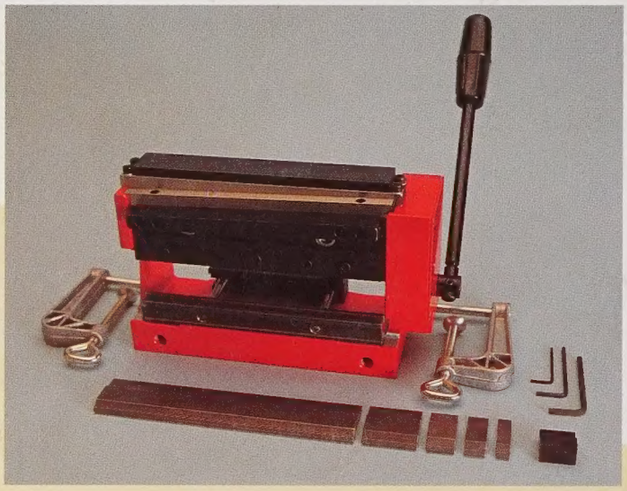

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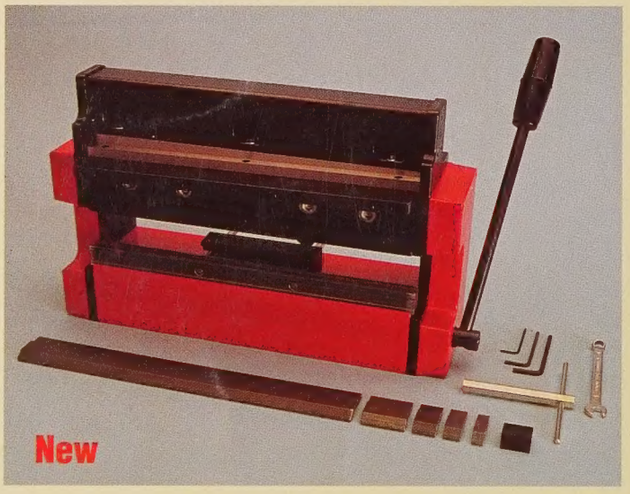

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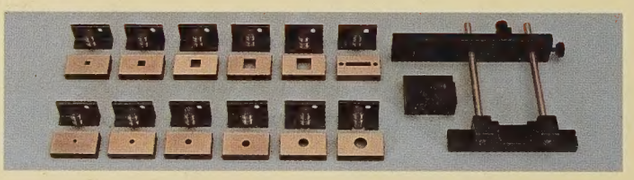

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